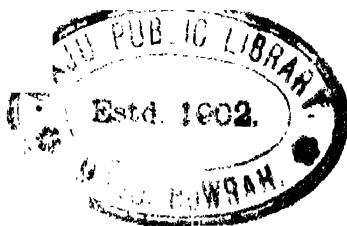
SOCIAL REFORM IN BENGAL

A SIDE SKETCH.

BY

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TO HIS HIGHNESS

MAHARAJA

SIR SAYAJI RAO GAIKWAR BAHADUR, G.C.S.I.

RULER OF BARODA,

Whose deep patriotism, enlightened views and devotion

to the service of his native country, added to the

highest princely qualities that have ever

adorned a ruler, are a living example

to the princes and people

of India,

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

With profound respect and admiration

BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE following sketches, with the exception of the last two and the introduction, originally appeared in two journals, *New India* and the *Indian Mirror*, and are reprinted from them with only a few additions and alterations. The last two, which are also the longest, appear in this pamphlet for the first time. My object in the former was to give to the public some idea of the work done by one of our living reformers while discussing current topics of a social nature, and thus to show how those who are now working for the advancement of native society might be helped by the trials, difficulties, struggles and successes of an old worker in the same field. The last two sketches have also a similar object, but their difference from the others is that they do not discuss any current topics and are not confined to the work of a single person, but are rather two short histories of the female education and widow-marriage movements in Bengal from their earliest beginnings to the present day. I am aware that they are not complete, and that many workers and many incidents are perhaps left unnoticed in them, such as would have found a place in fuller histories of the movements. The materials at my disposal were neither ample nor adequate. But such as they were, I have tried my best to utilise them. The writer of a fuller history of social reform in Bengal will, I presume, find these and the preceding sketches not a little helpful to him.

In the introduction I discuss the general principles of reform and try to prove, by references to our ancient records, that the present reform movement is, in a true sense, a revival movement, our reformed ideas being mostly revivals of those which are sanctioned in the Shashtras and which actually guided the conduct of our ancestors in ancient India.

I need hardly say that this pamphlet is not intended as, and makes not the least pretension to being, a regular biography. But I hope that those who like biography and feel benefited by its study, will find something interesting and profitable in the personal narratives given in these sketches. They will, it is hoped, find in them some striking illustrations of the workings of Providence in the life of man, specially in the life of a faithful and devoted servant of God, and thus be confirmed in their faith and trust in him. They contain, it is believed, not a few of those "footprints" of which the poet speaks,—

"Footprints on the sands of time;
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forelorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again."



INTRODUCTION:

Reform on Shastric Lines.

Before commencing my proposed narratives of social reform work in Bengal, I propose to make a few observations on the general principles of reform and on the relation of the ideas with which our modern reformers have been inspired and which they have endeavoured to carry out, with those which were current in ancient India and which we meet with in our ancient records. A comparison of these two classes of ideas and of the social condition of the country in ancient times and at the present day, will show that modern Indian reform, as inaugurated by the eminent men I have spoken of in the following pages, has been chiefly a reform on shastric lines, and that the popular opposition to it, and the branding of the reformers as denationalised innovators and revolutionaries, have been the result of ignorance—ignorance of the social history of the country. The absence of a liberal system of education until very recent times—a system that could enlighten the great mass of the people and help in the onward march of the country in the path of progress—has been at the root of this ignorance, and the natural leaders of the country, the priests and ministers of religion, have systematically tried to keep the people in ignorance and superstition, and have, as was inevitable, themselves become the dupes of the superstition they have attempted to perpetuate. But the times are now changing, and the people are awakening to their real history and their real needs. The following observations may, it is hoped, help a little in this awakening and in appraising the true value of the work done by our leaders,—those whom we have blindly persecuted as foes and aliens, but who are our truest friends and have followed faithfully in the steps of our much revered ancient *rishis*.

The basal principle on which the edifice of social reform should be reared, the seed from which the tree of reform really grows, is the voice of conscience in the soul of man. It is not necessary that the voice of conscience should always be recognised as the voice of a personal God. But it is essential to all true form that the pressure of a higher law than the law of human likes and dislikes should be felt by the reformer. Buddha's doctrine of an eternal law of *karma*, though seemingly atheistic, was yet the recognition of a superhuman law, and was therefore sufficient as the foundation of a reform movement. All other important reform movements of the world, such as the Christian, the Muhammadan, the Sikh and the Puritan, have been based on the same principle. Modern Indian reform also has the same sure foundation. Individual regeneration, at any rate the beginning of such regeneration, must precede the attempt to regenerate society. Raja Rammohan Ray, and a host of later reformers who have followed him, have all been inspired by the voice of God in conscience and been enabled by the power of God to brave obloquy, persecution, excommunication, unpopularity and self-sacrifice of all other sorts.

But are there not, it may be objected, unregenerate reformers on the one hand and regenerate, virtuous people on the other, who are opposed to all reforms? The answer is, that all so-called reformers are not true reformers. Some only blindly or selfishly follow true reformers and share neither their struggles nor their difficulties. Others begin the work of reform and regeneration, but stop in their careers and cease to be reformers. The case of regenerate conservatives may be explained by the fact that there are some who, though they listen to the voice of conscience within them, cannot look much beyond themselves. They have either very narrow or very incorrect views of social duty. But there are thousands who, though they see the evils of society and have advanced ideas of social duty, have not the courage to break through baneful social customs, and who defend their conformity to them by sophistical arguments. One of the arguments of this class is, that to be effective reformers we should not alienate ourselves from our communities by acting against established custom. The answer to this argument is, that if following the voice of conscience, if faithfulness to our sense of truth and right, does alienate us from any society, that society deserves to be abandoned. But the fact is, that the conduct of modern Indian reformers has not really taken them beyond the pale of their mother community. With all their violation of rules based on superstition and injustice, they do remain integral parts of the great Hindu society. The second of the arguments referred to is, that before we act against established custom, we should convince the great majority of our countrymen of the truth of our advanced ideas. The answer to this argument is the obvious fact that if we could wait till the majority were convinced of the truth of our ideas, if we could postpone the carrying out of these ideas till that time, no necessity would remain of ever carrying them out. If acting according to true and right principles be proper at any time, it is proper now, and it should never be postponed. Moreover, no true reformation has, in any age or country, taken place in the way proposed. A few must always lead and show the way. Another argument commonly brought forward in this connection is, that we should not hurt the feelings of our parents, to whom we owe so much, and those of our dear and near relatives, by acting according to our ideas, however true they may be. The obvious answer to this argument is, that if we were acting from nothing higher than our individual likes and dislikes, hurting the feelings of our dear and near relatives would really be improper; but as reformed conduct really proceeds from our obedience to the voice of One who has infinitely greater claims to our allegiance than any earthly friend or relative, we cannot help hurting the feelings of our dear and near ones when it unavoidably results from our faithfulness to conscience. That such conduct was known and drew admiration in ancient India, is clear from the story of Prahlad, who is said to have suffered the most dreadful persecution at the hands of his father for following the dictates of his conscience. The story is perhaps partly mythical, as appears from the miracles related therein. Nevertheless it is important as showing the soundness of moral judgment on the part of the author and those who

thought with him. But what makes the record of such bold and revolutionary conduct in the past so scanty? There was internal and external regeneration in the country in those days as there is now, and yet why was there so little of the actual abolition of sacrifices and image-worship and other reforms of modern times? The answer is, that the present-day illumination resulting from the advancement of scientific knowledge had not dawned in those days. For instance, some of the wisest of Hindus in those days, even those who had the most advanced ideas of God, believed nevertheless in the existence of gods and goddesses and in their demanding burnt offerings from us. The great difference between ancients Theists and us, the Theists of the present day, is, that while the former believed in the existence of gods and goddesses and in their duties to them, we see no proof of the existence of such beings, and if we ever think of the possibility of created beings higher than ourselves, we think they cannot possibly take delight in burnt offerings. Yet, as a matter of fact, our reformed ideas are mostly revivals of truths that were known to the ancients, and the modern reform movement is a revival movement in a true sense. Our present idolatry is not really an orthodox, but a heterodox practice, judged from the standpoint of scriptural and truly national Hinduism. All so-called sacred books are not national scriptures. The *Smritis*, the *Puranas* and the *Tantras* are not national, but sectarian scriptures. Some of them extol gods and cults which the others reject and cry down. Shivite books revile Vishnu, and Vishnuite books hold up Shiva to ridicule. The only books universally accepted by the nation are the Vedas. But the Vedas, again, are divided into the *karma-kanda* and the *jnana-kanda.* The former inculcates the sacrificial worship of various gods and goddesses, and is intended for those who do not know and cannot comprehend the Infinite Brahman. The motives which lead to the sacrificial worship of the gods are condemned in the latter. It is represented by the *Upanishads*, which, therefore, are the highest scriptures of the nation. Two other books, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavadgita*, are considered parts of the national canon, the three comprising what is called the *Prasthanatrayam.* These three and no others form the canonical books of the national faith, and their acceptance as such has a history behind it as much as the acceptance of the Jewish or the Christian canon. The leaders of all Hindu sects have accepted these books and given them their own interpretations, not excepting Raja Rammohan Ray, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj. Now, the fact is, that none of these books teach either idolatry or caste, in the exclusive form in which the latter prevails in the country at the present day. Beginning with the *karmakanda* of the Vedas, we find, that though there is a good deal of what is called polytheism in it, of the personification of the various powers of Nature, there is no image-worship in it, no childish making of our own gods and fancying them to be beings superior to us. And even before the *karma-kanda* canon was completed, we find some *rishis* blessed with the revelation of Brahman's unity and saying—'*Ekam sat bipra bahuda badanti*'—The One Being the wise call by various names. The *karma-kanda* thus itself corrects its own earlier polytheism. In the *Upani-*

shads we find this monotheistic process completed. But some of the composers of the *Upanishads* continue to believe in the gods—a belief by no means incompatible with belief in the unity of the Supreme Being. Belief in the existence of higher orders of being is no more so than belief in man and creatures inferior to him. But some of the Upanishadic thinkers were clearly disbelievers in the gods. Such was the great sage Yajnavalkya, as appears from his natural and psychological explanation of *devavad* in the ninth *Brahmana* of the third chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.* His severe and almost savage condemnation of *deva*-worshippers, whom he likens to the domestic animals of the gods in I. 4. 10. of the same Upanishad, proves the same remarkable fact. His characterization of the gods themselves (supposing them to exist) as opposed to man's acquisition of a true knowledge of Brahman, is equally remarkable. There is, however, a form of worship in the Upanishads called *Pratika Upasana* which may seem to be somewhat indentical with image-worship, but is not really so. It consists only in concentrating the mind on natural objects like the sun, the moon, fire, air &c., and identifying them with Brahman, who, according to the Upanishads, is All-in-all,—'*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma.*' This form of meditation is prescribed for those who cannot at once fix their minds on the Infinite and the Absolute, and it is expressly taught that it is to be given up in the higher stages of spiritual life. Coming to the *Sutra* period, we find Jaimini, the great interpreter of the earlier portion of the Vedas, a sage about whose orthodoxy there can be no question, plainly teaching that the Vedic gods are inanimate objects, raised to divinity by the poetic imagination of the Vedic *rishis*! At any rate, this is how the *Vedanta Sutras*, I. 3. 32 and their commentator, Sankaracharya, interpret Jaimini. It is curious that the former, whose chief concern was with Brahman rather than with the gods, care more for them than the accepted interpreter of the *karmakanda.* The author of the *Vedanta Sutras*, however, though believing in the gods, is quite aware of the limitations of *deva*-worship and even of the *pratika*-worship of Brahman, for he expressly says, in the twenty-third aphorism of the third pada, fourth chapter of his work, that the *pratika*-worshipper is not entitled to liberation. Coming now to the *Bhagavadgita*, we find in the author a great advocate, indeed, of sacrifices to the gods, but one who says not a word about images and their worship. His defence of sacrifices is evidently due more to his conservatism than to any valid reason drawn from his spiritual experience, for he cannot show why, when we have given up the motives that originally led to sacrifices, we should still cling to them, and why such exalted beings as the gods should demand from us the trifles that are offered in sacrifices. That the worship of many gods, however, militates against our higher spiritual instincts, interfering with the entire devotion of the heart to the one Brahman without a second,—this the author seems to have clearly seen; for in the twenty-fourth verse of his fourth chapter, he advises us to contemplate every thing and every person connected withsac rifices as Brahman—'*Brahmarpanam Brahmahabih* &c.,' thus indirectly condemning the rites he himself advocates. Coming down to later literature

and non-canonical books, we find no mention of images in the *Mahabharata*, and even some of the *Puranas* are free from it. Manu has no direct mention of idolatry, but the practice seems to have begun in some quarters in his time and to have been looked upon by him and other orthodox Brahmanas as a heterodox innovation; for he excludes "*devala* Brahmanas," that is Brahmanas who worshipped images, from attendance at sacrifices, like other impure or objectionable persons! Many antiquarians, therefore, agree in thinking that the practice is an imitation of the Buddhistic worship of the images of saints, and is a product of Atheism and Paganism. The Buddhists dethroned the gods and even Brahman himself from the human heart. The thoughtful few might be contented with lofty flights of meditation, but what could they give to the simple and thoughtless millions that entered their ranks? They gave them the images of Buddha and his disciples, and the Hindu revivalists, when they took the place of the receding Buddhistic teachers, could not think of giving us anything better than idols borrowed from the Non-Aryans or fashioned out of the poetic fancies of the Vedic sages. The heterodox character of Idolatry, therefore, admits of no doubt, and idolators should not consider themselves orthodox Hindus and twit the Brahmos with heterodoxy. As to wearing or discarding the sacrificial thread, it is only when we remember its history that we see whether a spiritual worshipper of God should hug it as a holy badge or throw it aside as unholy and untrustworthy as a snake. One not entitled to offering sacrifices to the gods had no right to wearing the thread. A Brahmana, a Kshatriya or a Vasya, as soon as he, by his training, became entitled to offering sacrifices, was required to use it—not at all times, as is the practice now—but at the time of offering sacrifices, in which it seems to have been used in taking measurements of the sacrificial altar. But when one had done with sacrifices, when he had known the Supreme Brahman and was about to take the vow of seeking union with him, he had to discard his sacrificial thread as solemnly as he had adopted it. This is still the practice in the Vedantic sect of Sankaracharya. The modern Brahmo practice of discarding the thread is therefore a strictly orthodox practice, and the practice of those who persist in keeping the badge of *deva*-worship even when they have given up believing in the gods and in the efficacy of sacrifices, due to either igorance or moral cowardice. In the narratives that follow, the reader will have some idea of the bitter persecution that Babu Sasipada Banurji met with at the hands of his relatives and fellow-villagers for discarding his sacrificial thread at the call of conscience. In fact I have given a faint indication only of what actually happened, —the reality far transcended the meagre description given. How many other true followers of Brahman have suffered at the hands of persecutors who knew not or cared not to know what the shastras teach on the subject!

As to caste, it cannot be believed that thoughtful and educated people look upon it in the same light as the ignorant masses. But there is a modern argument for caste distinctions which seems to commend itself to many. It is the argument from heredity. This argument is often used in upholding the supremacy of the Brahmana

and the other 'higher' castes,—who are said to have been under a higher discipline from time immemorial,—over the other castes. Now, it may very well be asked whether the Brahmanas are, if all things be taken together, really superior to the other castes. How many Brahmanas can claim to be the descendants of a long line of learned ancestors? Have not whole families been but simple, unlearned priests from time immemorial? As to virtue, if the Brahmanas have shown certain exceptional virtues, are not certain vices, on the other hand, such as egotism, arrogance, mendicancy and want of self-respect, found among them in a superabundant degree? In the same manner, are not the Kshatriyas peculiarly liable to being irritable, overbearing and oppressive? The so-called higher classes are, then, not altogether higher than those whom they consider as their inferiors. On the other hand, there is a good deal of spiritual culture among some of the so-called lower classes,—such culture as makes them superior to many belonging to the 'higher' classes. In fact, modesty, piety and benevolence seem to be more common among the classes spoken of than in those who boast of their high birth. In respect to purely intellectual culture also, are not cases of keen intelligence and great mental powers among the classes from which they were least expected, growing more and more numerous and showing that the doctrine of heredity, as commonly accepted, is much overstrained? The fact is, heredity and individuality must both be taken into account. An individual is not a mere reproduction of his parents. If he were so, there would be nothing in him more than there was in the parents. But as Darwin says, and as we might see even without the help of Darwin, every individual shows a 'variation' inexplicable by his pedigree. And sometimes the variation is most surprising, and shows how little truth there is in the doctrine of heredity. Immanuel Kant was the son of a poor and simple saddle-maker, and yet he constructed a system of philosophy which is the wonder of the world. Every individual, we should remember, is a fresh incarnation of God, a fresh manifestation of the Divine essence, and there is no knowing how much of that essence will be mainfested in each. Coming to the actual state of things in this province as regards the distinction of castes, we find that there is already great disintegration and confusion in the matter. Caste consists in distinctions and restrictions as to eating, professions and marriage. In the great cities and centres of enlightenment, restrictions as to eating have gone out of fashion among the educated classes. Distinctions as to professions have completely passed away. It is only in marriage that restrictions linger. Intermarriages are now unknown outside the Brahmo Samaj. But in ancient times it was not so. Intermarriage is not an innovation, but a revival, as a brief history of the caste system will show. There was no caste in the earlier Vedic period. The mention of the four castes in the tenth *mandala* of the *Rigveda* is a later addition. Coming to the Upanishad period, we find the system as a division of professions already established, but it had none of the later restrictions about interdining and intermarriage. Ushasti Chakrayana, a learned priest named in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, ate food already partaken of by an elephant-driver. Satyakama Jabali, whose mother herself could not say who his father was, was taken

as a Brahmana by his *guru*, because he had ventured to tell that unpleasant truth about his birth. Raikva, a great teacher of wisdom, accepted as his wife the daughter of a chief named Janasruti Pautrayana, who was either a Kshatriya or a Sudra. Chitra, Prabahana, Ajatasatru and other Kshatriya teachers taught the highest wisdom to their Brahmana pupils. Coming to the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, we find King Dasaratha marrying Sumitra, a Vaisya lady, and giving Shanta, his daughter, in marriage to the Brahmana sage, Rishyasringa. We again see Vishvamitra, a Kshatriya, rising to Brahmanahood by his austerities. King Yayati marries Devayani, the daughter of Sukracharya, a Brahmana sage. King Shantanu takes, as his lawful wife, Satyavati, a fisherman's daughter, and Bhishma, his son by his former wife, Ganga, not only promotes the marriage, but even gives up his birthright in favour of the fishwoman's sons. The great Vyasa is born of the Brahmana sage, Parasar, and the same fishwoman before her marriage with Shantanu. One should like to ask the modern advocates of caste to say to what caste belonged Vyasa and the two royal personages, Pandu and Dhritarashtra, whom he begat by the two widowed princesses of the Kuru family, Amba and Ambalika. One might also remind them, that when the sage Durbasa and his followers went to the forest to try Yudisthira's hospitality, he did not think of cooking his own food, for we read, that, at Sri-Krishna's command, Draupadi brought out her great cooking bowl to show him if a few crumbs of the food already partaken of still clung to it and might be miraculously multiplied into a sumptuous dinner. Did Sri-Krishna, again, need the service of a Brahmana or a Kshatriya cook when, in his childhood, he sojourned among the cowherds and thoroughly identified himself with them? How did he again, though said to be our great exemplar, being, as is believed, the very incarnation of the Divine wisdom and righteousness, violate caste rules so far as to teach the highest wisdom to mankind, a task to which, according to caste restrictions, a Brahmana alone is entitled? How could Vidura and Dharmabyadha, again, though Sudras by birth, be so learned in the Vedas? If, by their higher aptitudes, they showed that they belonged to higher castes in their former incarnations, should not the same be believed of those Sudras whose labours in the field of Vedic literature in these days excite so much jealousy and opposition in some Brahmanas? Coming however, to the *Bhagavadgita*, we find, indeed, a system of caste advocated, a distinction according to *guna*, quality, and *karma*, duty. But that is natural and not man-made caste. By nature, the children of the same parents may be teachers, statesmen, merchants or labourers. The *Gita* nowhere says that caste is hereditary. It indeed speaks against *varnasankaras*; but can the term indicate children of mixed marriages, when the great Arjuna, to whom the *Gita* is addressed, is himself such a child? Perhaps the term means children of illegal unions. • After all, however, the *Gita*, though saying a good deal about *guna* and *karma*, clearly points, in several of its passages, specially in the fourteenth chapter, to a state when man rises above *guna* and *karma*, to *nistraigunya* and *naishkarmya*, wherein all differences are merged in conscious union with Brahman. Coming to present times, we find that caste, as it prevails in the Panjab and

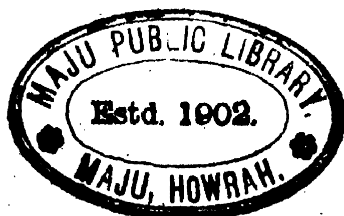
Sindh, has no restrictions as to eating, and that the *anulom* form of marriage is still in vogue among the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas of Sindh, and among certain classes in Travancore. Interdining and intermarriage, therefore, are by no means un-Hindu practices and no one has the right to twit modern Hindu reformers with heterodoxy for following and encouraging such practices. The fact is, moreover, that levelling influences more powerful than any that existed in by-gone ages—influences that are levelling up rather than levelling down all castes—are now fast making caste distinctions impossible. Liberal education under a common system is such a powerful influence. Who can distinguish castes in a school or college class, where men of 'lower' castes often beat down those of the 'higher.' A living religion that transforms the thoughts and feelings while it remoulds external conduct, is even a more powerful levelling influence. How can caste survive these potent influences?

A few words about the education and emancipation of women shall close the discussion. We hear all around us such questions as the following:—'Shall we educate our women or not?' 'How much education should we impart to them?' 'Shall we give them freedom to come out and move about, or shall we not?' These very questions show that those who ask them look upon their women as possessions, as slaves, at any rate as wards under perpetual tutelage. They do not look upon them as free souls, as ends unto themselves. Consider them as such souls, as having an absolute value in themselves and not merely as having a relative value as means of man's happiness,—and then such questions as the above will be impossible. It is not for us to give or not to give them education and emancipation. They deserve them and shall have them as free beings, as ends unto themselves. As such, they must be allowed a free and full development of their individuality,—they must be allowed to think and act for themselves. To attain such a development, they must have the same kind and amount of general education as men, for as spiritual beings they have the same mental and moral powers as we. Then, as men go through special systems of education according to their peculiar needs and conditions of life, so must women also have such education according to their requirements. Now, in respect to this subject also,—the education and emancipation of women,—modern liberal ideas are mostly revivals of old ideas. There were learned women in ancient and medieval India such as Gargi, Maitreyi and Ubhaybharati, who moved about freely and even addressed public meetings. The seclusion of women is a most un-Hindu practice, imitated from the Mussalmans, and does not exist in those provinces of the country in which Muhammadan influence has not been deep. In Bombay and Madras, and to a great extent in the Panjab, women of respectable families freely go about and attend schools and public meetings. So, in granting the same freedom to our women in Bengal, we shall only revive an old Hindu custom.

Let us now return to the point from which we started,—faithfulness to the voice of conscience. Nothing is more needed in these days than bold, fearless, straightforward conduct—faithfully carrying out our convictions about such matters as the spiritual worship of God and the rejection of idolatrous practices, discarding caste and promot-

ing the union of the various castes and classes of the country and the amelioration of the condition of our women. A wise Englishman has said about our caste system, that if there is anything most excellently calculated to prevent national unity in India, it is the caste system, and a Government desiring to keep the different classes of the Indian community apart from one another, has nothing more to do than foster and nurse this system. Those who are encouraging caste by their conduct and teachings, are therefore playing into the hands of our worst enemies—those who would be glad to see us always disunited. A true lover of the country should, on the contrary, hate everything that stands in the way of our union and progress. No less a person than the American sage, Emerson, has said that the gospel of hate should be preached along with the gospel of love. If one does not hate vice, his virtue is an edgeless virtue and is of little use. There is too much of such virtue in our country—virtue that does not purify the atmosphere around it. We do require a gospel of hate. If truth deserves to be loved, falsehood deserves to be hated. If the spiritual worship of God is lovable, idolatry is hateful. If love and union are to be promoted, caste and the sophistry that defends it deserve to be detested. Earnest and combined efforts are now being made to raise the country from its degradation. These efforts will be fruitless if we follow those blind leaders of the blind whose lives are full of selfishness, cowardice and hypocrisy. Let us follow the voice of conscience in our own hearts and follow those who follow conscience. The following pages, it is hoped, will help us not a little to discriminate between our true leaders, those who have loved the country and sacrificed themselves at every step in rendering it real service, and those who have thought only of their own comforts and popularity with the masses, and have either not seen the true light at all, or seeing it, have wilfully put it under a bushel.





SOCIAL REFORM IN BENGAL:

A SIDE SKETCH.

SOCIAL REFORM:

A FORWARD LOOK.

It must be very gratifying to the friends of social reform that recent discouragements caused by the death, retirement from public life and, in some cases, the backsliding of some of the prominent workers in the cause, have not damped the spirits of the few earnest men in the country who recognise the supreme importance of the work. So we find that arrangements for the next meeting of the National Social Conference at Ahmedabad are being earnestly pushed on side by side with those for the National Congress. The usual circular letter of the secretaries announcing the subjects provisionally fixed for consideration before the Conference, and inviting suggestions and information of work done in the different centres and also asking for the names of delegates elected by the various associations throughout the country for promoting reform work, is before us. We wish the organisers every success and hope that their persistence and steadiness will gradually lead to the recognition—very feeble and inadequate at present—that every real political reform must succeed and be based on social reform. It is our social slavery and degradation that has brought about our political subjection. Let only our homes and social circles be free, and the freedom of the country—the management of our own affairs by ourselves and for our own immediate good and not in the interest of other people—will be only a question of time. Let us only shake off the tyranny of ignorance and foolish customs, however hoary with age, and we shall see what other tyranny presses upon us for long. The power and supremacy of England to-day proceeds from her free homes and free social institutions—the observance of the law of righteousness as between man and man and class and class. Her political institutions are but the fruits of the life throbbing at the roots of the national life. If the fruits attract us, let our serious attention be directed to the hidden life that gives them forth. This need not, indeed, lead us to the wholesale adoption of English manners or even English modes

of thinking. It should only make us think more deeply than we are doing of the principles lying at the root of our own domestic and social life, consider which of them are healthy and which unhealthy, and set about mending our own affairs. It should lead us to repent of iniquities we have been practising and prepetuating concerning our own wives, daughters, sisters, and men who are really our own, but whom we have long treated as aliens. It should lead us to repent and reform—the necessary conditions of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, whether religious, social or political.

It is curious, and illustrates one of the inscrutable ways of Providence in dealing with nations, that Bengal, which, only a few years back, led the army of social reform, should have fallen into a sort of torpor and inactivity and should look on coldly and dreamily while the other provinces are showing praiseworthy signs of activity. The announcement of a widow-remarriage according to orthodox rites in these columns, the other day, came to the present writer almost as a surprise, so little of such things has been heard of late years. The work done in years past, however, has not been in vain. Notwithstanding Bengal's present inactivity, it will be found that in actual progress in social matters—in liberal ideas and ways of living—she is still far ahead of her sister provinces. Her present lethargy seems to be, in a sense, designed by Providence itself. She is only a limb in the nation's vast frame,—a most important limb no doubt. Now, it will not do for a single limb, however useful, to grow active and vigorous while the others remain weak and unhealthy. Real growth and strength is, again, impossible in such a case. 'Let the other limbs also grow in health and strength'—seems to be the mandate of God at the present time. To vary the simile, Bengal seems to have behaved in years past like a powerful horse, trying to drag the coach to which it is fastened, by main force, without regard to the weakness and slowness of its comrades. The coachman seems therefore to have held it back a little by tightening the reins. However, the progress which this province has made seems, however little, to be real and lasting notwithstanding reactionary tendencies in particular cases. Some of the trees reared by veteran reformers who have either passed away from us or are hidden by the infirmities of age from the public gaze, seem indeed dried up and unable to bear fruit. But the seeds they have spread throughout the country are not dead, but are fructifying.

We shall illustrate our remarks by a brief reference to the life and work of a Bengali reformer whose many-sided activity during a long life has, for all practical purposes, come to a close, and who now apparently looks forward to what he may be called upon to do in a higher world more than in this. We refer to Babu Sasipada Banarji, the founder of the now defunct Hindu Widows' Home at Barahanagar. The reforming activity of this gentleman began when he was quite a child—at the time when he was initiated into the daily religious duties of a Brahman by his family *guru*. Shortly after his initiation he complained of the unsuitableness of the *mantra* the *guru*

had given him—its unsuitableness to one who, even before joining any body of Bengal reformers, was already a spiritual worshipper of the Supreme Being. The *guru*, with a praiseworthy appreciation of his pupil's higher spiritual status, changed the ordinary *mantra* for '*Ananda Brahmeti*' of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. The young reformer's next work was his marriage at 20,—late for those times and for one of his high birth,—when he scrupulously avoided all money transactions, so usual in such cases.

Immediately after his marriage he took up the education of his young wife, (1861)—a bold step in those days,—and gradually founded a sort of school attended by other female members, including some widows, of his family. This school shortly developed itself into a regular Girls' School which our reformer managed amidst disadvantages and persecutions which can scarcely be imagined in these days.

He next put his hand to nursery reform, being moved to it by the death, in the nursery, of his first child in consequence of the wholesale violation of all sanitary laws that characterised the lying-in-room of those times and that has caused and is still causing the death of so many thousands of innocents in this enlightened city. Mr. Banurji was successful in effecting the needful reform in his own family, not, however, without undergoing many trials and difficulties, and his example has been followed far and wide in this province. Our reformer was next touched by the horrible drunkenness of his native town and of the country in general in those days. This led to the establishment of a Temperance Society in connection with which Babu Sasipada worked long and earnestly and saved many a child of God from the deadly grip of the evil one. The persecutions and indignities to which the young temperance worker was exposed by the friends of drink deserve a more detailed notice than what we can give them in a newspaper article. The temperance movement, however, led to other institutions for public good,—to a prayer-meeting, a library and a society for literary and social improvement, of all of which our reformer was the life and chief worker. His attention was next drawn to the misery and degradation of the labouring classes, whose number was very large for a town of the dimensions of Barahanagar on account of the establishment there of a number of mills by English companies. What Babu Sasipada did for these classes, by establishing night schools, clubs, prayer-meetings, savings banks, and a monthly journal for them, by visiting them in their homes, by mixing with them as a brother and actively sympathising with them in all their trials and sufferings, would fill a volume by itself if it were to be fully told. The sorrows of the Hindu widow then engaged our friend's attention. While only a child of eight years, a profound impression had been made upon his mind by a most horrible case of oppression on an erring widow in his own family, and the dedication of his energies to the amelioration of the condition of widows may be said to date from that time. The impresion we speak of was like the one produced on the mind of Raj sRam

mohan Ray by a case of *sati* in his own family when he was quite a child. However, like a true reformer, Mr. Banurji carried out the idea of widow-remarriage in his own family, getting a young widowed niece of his remarried amidst persecutions, alienations and excommunications which have fallen to the lot of few reformers. Our reformer then took a step which seemed ahead of the times even to the most advanced of his brother reformers. He sailed (1871) to Europe in company with his young wife, the first Hindu lady to visit England, and was warmly received there by the friends of reform. His sojourn in that land of philanthropic activity and his gaining the friendship of a number of noble Englishmen and Englishwomen led to our friend's devoting himself to the good of his country with redoubled energy on his return home. While his other activities, briefly noticed above, continued, and while he put his hand to numerous other works which we have no space to notice even passingly, he carried out into action two noble ideas that he had already formed in his mind, and the mention of which shall close this article. They are (1) the establishment of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha—a liberal religious union of men of all creeds,—an idea that was looked upon as utopian or something worse even by the most liberal of Mr. Banurji's co-adjutors, but which the most advanced nation of the world at last successfully carried out in 1899 at Chicago, and (2) the founding of the Hindu Widow's Home, whose history similar institutions to which it has led in this province an would be a most interesting chapter in the social hi country.

SOCIAL REFORM IN BENGAL.

II.

In an article headed 'Social Reform: a Forward Look' in the last issue of this paper, I illustrated the social progress made in this province by a brief reference to the work done by a single Bengali reformer, Babu Sasipada Banurji. If Mr. Banurji stood alone, with no worthy predecessors, contemporaries and followers, my remarks on the prominent position occupied by the province among her sister provinces, would scarcely have any value. A single swallow does not make summer. But the fact is that the reformer I specially mentioned not only has had for his predecessors and contemporaries such eminent men as Raja Rammohan Ray, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur, Babu Kesavchandra Sen and Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, but has been followed by a host of other reformers so numerous that it would be offensive to name some to the exclusion of others. There has indeed been no worker in the field, since Babu Sasipada laid down his arms, whose energy and versatility may be compared to his and those of his noble predecessors and contemporaries. Our new reformers lack that breadth and many-sidedness of character and that inventiveness and intrepidity that make true geniuses. They are

but quietly following the tracks laid down for them by the labours of those great men who have gone before them. But the very quietness with which progress is now being made along the lines indicated by our leaders, shows the extent and reality of the work done by them. The complacence with which people now look on reforms which exposed the pioneers to the bitterest persecutions and led them to be regarded as beyond the pale of Hindu society, though really its brightest jewels, proves both the greatness of their aims and the wisdom of their methods. The conservative's plea for reform "along the line of least resistance" is not only a cowardly shrinking from unpopularity, but also a miscalculation of the latent powers of society to recover its health when the knife is vigorously applied to the removal of its festering sores. If sea-voyages, widow-remarriages, inter-caste dining in the bigger towns, adult marriages in the case of girls, and the slackening of caste-bonds in the sub-castes or sub-classes in the same castes, are now allowed or more or less quietly passed over, and even more radical reforms like inter-caste and inter-racial marriages meet with no bitter persecution, we have only to thank for all this the noble courage and self-sacrifice of the pioneers of Bengal reform. A few more facts from the life of our last great reformer may be interesting and may serve to brace up the new workers in the field. Talking of self-sacrifice, it reminds one of the conduct of some reformers all whose reforms relate to other people : they will have no reform in their own homes. Very different were the men I have named and very different is the man I have specially spoken of. Vidyasagar got his own son married to a widow. When, on the death of his first wife, Sasipada thought of marrying again, he was urged by several of his friends to marry a spinster, but he resolutely refused to accept such proposals, and married a widow, the lady who has since been his constant help-mate in all that he has done for widows and others. No fewer than forty widows have been got remarried through the efforts of our reformer and his noble wife. The whole question of marriage reform, including those of child and early marriage, the proper age of marriage, choice in marriage and inter-caste marriage has engaged the life-long thought and activity of this veteran, and many a reform, including even inter-provincial marriage, has been quietly carried out by him in the circle of his family and friends. The question of raising the low castes, a question which deservedly finds a place in the program of the Social Conference, was practically solved by him when he mixed as a brother with the most hated and abhorred in the land, now eating with charity paupers in a *Kalibari*, now nursing *a mehtar* in his hovel and then again joining in a picnic organised for working men, some of whom belonged to the lowest strata of society. Let our new reformers imitate these ways in their conduct towards their 'low-born' brethren, and the question of raising them will be quickly solved. It will not be solved by any amount of speaking and writing so long as we keep aloo from them and constantly remind them of our superiority.

Reform, like charity, must begin at home. The secret of success

in the case of all true reformers is the gaining of helpers and coadjutors among their nearest kith and kin, in other words, having a reformed home. We see this notably in the case of the gentleman whom I have called our last great reformer. All the reforms he has laid his hand to, have been first carried out in his own home, and then tried and effected outside—in the country. Nothing, however, worth honourable mention, least of all, the heroic work of social reform, could be done by him or can be done by any one of us, without a sincere and deep-rooted faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice—faith in him who is himself Truth and Justice. The rock of faith is the truest basis of all reform work—the rock which neither unpopularity nor excommunication can shake. Let all the provinces of India,—the most as well as the least advanced—join hands in realising the goal of all our efforts—a reformed, purified and vigorous Indian society.

SOCIAL REFORM IN BENGAL.

III.

ELEVATION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

The addition of an Industrial Exhibition to the Congress program, —a feature of the movement that bids fair to be a permanent one—is a move in the right direction, and invests the movement with an air of importance and practical usefulness which, in the eyes of a large class of people, was absent from it before. It attracts sympathy from unexpected quarters and makes it possible for people to co-operate whose co-operation would be impossible if the Congress confined itself to its original program of mere political agitation. There are, again, many who, though sincerely wishing that our people should acquire all the political rights and privileges they deserve, have no faith in political agitation—in ventilating our grievances and constantly appealing to our rulers. '*Bhikshdydm naiva naivacha,*' they say,—Nothing can be gained by begging; we must help ourselves. Heaven helps those who help themselves. The Industrial Exhibition is, so far as it goes, a practical carrying out of this adage in our national life. Let the movement prosper and expand. Its expansion is fraught with the most happy consequences to the social and political life of the nation. One—not the least—of the many aspects of the movement is that it brings the leaders of the nation into direct contact with the masses. This direct contact of the educated and the working classes will, in no distant future, lead to a closer co-operation for the national good than is at present possible, and effectively refute the charge brought against the Congress movement that it is the work of a 'microscopic minority"—though the minority thus characterised is

no more 'microscopic' now,—if it ever was—as the worthy President of the last Congress truly said.

But the masses ought and can be more closely approached than merely by an Industrial Exhibition. The Congress collectively and the Congress leaders individually ought to take more direct and active steps to reach the masses and raise their condition. When the Congress movement will be backed by the voice of millions of working people throughout the country, then truly will it have a representative character as the nation's Congress. When our Congress leaders will have the following of large classes of working people in actual contact with the joys and sorrows of life, with a burning interest in public questions—as effecting their daily lives and the future of their children,—then indeed will they become truly the leaders of the nation.

But we can reach the masses only by actively sympathising with their daily struggles, by closely inquiring into their actual wants and taking active measures to remove them. Thus only,—by mixing with them as brethren, by smiling with their smiles and weeping with their tears, and lending a helping hand to all their efforts to better their condition—can we actually raise them from their miserable state, inspire them with the ideals and aspirations that are burning in our hearts and arouse them to a consciousness of their rights and duties as citizens of a grand and growing empire.

What are the steps that should be taken to reach and raise the masses in the way suggested? Example is better than precept, and so, happening to have some knowledge of an actual attempt to ameliorate the condition of working people and the success that attended it, I shall give a brief narration of that attempt, hoping that such a narration will be a better, surer guide to those who would like to make similar attempts than anything I might say from a merely theoretical consideration of the subject.

I refer to the working men's movement inaugurated and conducted for a long time at Barahanagar near Calcutta by Babu Sasipada Banurji, who is well-known in this country and in England for his many philanthropic activities extending over nearly half a century, but whom the infirmities of old age have now forced to practically retire from public life. It was on the 1st of November, 1866, that this friend of the poor, moved by their sufferings, sympathising with their struggles, and actuated by a holy desire to save them from the fearful temptations that surrounded them on all sides, called together a large number of them and, in a long speech, tried to impress upon them the great importance of making organised efforts for improving their condition. Barahanagar, though comparatively a small place, contained a superabundant number of working people attached to the local mills and workshops, and was just the place where the masses needed to be specially looked after. The first result of the conference was the establishment of a Night School, with branches, established in the course of the next few years, at Kamarpara, Kutighata and Ariadaha. A Middle Vernacular School at Borai near Serampur attended by many

children of working people was also the result of the same movement. Mr. Banurji, with many an earnest effort, gained the active sympathy of the owners of the chief mills with his movement, and they furnished the school at Barahanagar with a house built at their own expense. But the village gentry, opposed to the movement from the beginning on the selfish ground that the common people when educated, would neither serve nor honour them, at last quarrelled with the mill-owners for some cause and led the latter to deprive the school of the house so kindly lent by them, and caused it to be removed elsewhere. The loss of the house, however, did not interfere either with the efficiency or expansion of the movement. A new house was built by Babu Sasipada Banurji and the movement went on as successfully as ever. The merchants themselves bore testimony to its tangible moral effects, declaring that those of their hands who attended Sasi Babu's school were the very people that were found to be most careful and painstaking in their work. A step forward in organization was taken by the estabiishment in August, 1870, of the "Workingmen's Club," which continued for a long time to be the central body and the rallying place for all who came under the influence of the movement. The Club held its meetings at the houses of the members, and great was the enthusiasm displayed not only by the men but also their mothers, wives and sisters on these occasions. The meetings were frequently attended and adressed by sympathising visitors from Calcutta such as Babus Dvarakanath Ganguli, Krishnakumar Mittra and Kalisankar Sukul. Lectures on various subjects, chiefly of a moral and practical character, were delivered in these meetings, and the effect of these, issuing, as they did, from a heart that deeply and actively sympathized with all the trials and difficulties of the members, began soon to be visible in their thrifty and temperate habits and their improved morals. Many of them even joined the Sadharan Dharma Sabha, a liberal union of all religionists, which Mr. Banurji established in 1873, and took an active part and evinced a hearty interest in the devotional exercises connected with the Sabha. Women's meetings were occasionally held at the house of Mr. Banurji and lantern exhibitions and other entertainments organised by him in order to awaken the interest of the working people in the movement. These entertainments included occasional excursions to interesting places. One of these excursions seemed so important to the friends of the workingmen's movement in England, that they drew the attention of Her Majesty, the late Queen Victoria, to it. Babu Sasipada had already established an "Anna Savings Bank" for receiving the deposits of his poor friends, and when the Government caused Savings Banks to be opened in every district headquarter and sub-division, he, with much earnest effort, induced the Government to introduce the system at Barahanagar, though it was not a sub-division. Another step which specially showed his hearty interest in the welfare of the working people and drew them closely to him, was the strenuous efforts he made to bring to justice a certain Police Sub-Inspector who had

committed a brutal outrage on a poor working woman and brought a false charge of rioting against a number of working men in order to screen himself from the consequences of his own crime. The innocent men were acquitted, but the culprit could not be brought to proper justice. His case was disgracefully taken up by some of the most enlightened of the villagers,—selfish and easy-going people who had all along been opposed to Mr. Banurji's reforming and philanthropic activities,—and an elaborate defence put forward in the man's favour. However, the friend of the poor, by his active defence of their rights and interests, gained a footing, stronger than ever, on their simple and susceptible hearts. What their feelings for him were, and what they had actually gained from him, may be gathered from the following extract from an address which was presented to him by them on the eve of his departure for England in 1871, and which appeared in an English garb in one of the papers of the time :—" We are very poor—there is no one in Barahanagar to help us in any way, but it is only you who have been labouring heartily for our good. It is impossible to state here how much benefit we have derived from the Workingmen's Club which has been established by you with a view to improve our character. The valuable instructions and lectures which you have been pleased to give us, have borne fruits. They have changed our character in many respects, so that some have even given up the habit of drinking and other vicious habits, and are now leading an honourable and peaceful life. It is impossible to tell here how much good you have done us by opening the Night School for our education. Before the school was established, we could not read or write, but now we can read easy books, write a little, and know something of Arithmetic. We now feel ashamed to commit those bads act which we could do before without any hesitation. You love us so much that whenever any one of us is sick, you visit him at his sick-bed and freely give medicines to those who cannot afford to buy them. What more shall we say—we honour you as our father !" After his return from England, Mr. Banurji greatly extended the sphere of his activity for the masses by starting for them an illustrated monthly pice paper entitled the *Bharat Sramajivi.* Both the circulation and the influence of this paper were remarkable. No fewer than fifteen thousand copies—a marvellous number for those days—were turned out every month and the paper reached all classes of the working population and was seen in the hands of peasants in the remotest corners of the province. The Magistrates of all the districts of Bengal subscribed for it, and friends and sympathisers were created everywhere and helped in its circulation. The *Barahanagar Samachar*, a weekly paper started by Mr. Banurji in 1873, also represented the grievances of the working people and helped on their cause. It may be added here that Mr. Banurji's efforts were not confined to improving the condition of the Hindus ; he had before his eyes also the miserable condition of the Muhammadan working classes. On the 20th October, 1872, he addressed a meet-

ing of Muhammadans and on the 10th December of the same year he established a school for boys belonging to that community. The mere outlines of the movement have grown into a long narrative, and I must stop here. My object has been to indicate the main lines along which a movement for reaching and raising the masses should work. The work is of national importance and must be carried on with the combined forces of the nation. Individuals may only show the way, as Babu Sasipada Banurji has done. They, however capacious and resourceful, cannot be expected to do it on any large scale and for any great length of time. Let the National Congress take it up; let it establish institutions like those I have spoken of throughout the land and we shall see the face of the country changed in the course of a few short years. If the Congress can thus take up in its own hands the work of educating the masses, it will not only gain their sympathy and co-operation in all questions of national importance and thus be the people's representative in the true sense, but the education of the people itself will be conducted on much sounder and correcter principles than any foreign agency like the Government, however well-meaning, can conduct it. Let our leading men therefore think out this great problem of the national education of the masses and formulate a scheme resulting in a close relation between them and those whose interests it should be their hightest glory to serve.

SOCIAL REFORM.

IV.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE WIDOW MOVEMENT.

It is gratifying to see that though the chief actors on the stage of the amelioration of widows are one by one passing behind the curtain, the work is making slow but sure progress in various shapes throughout the country. It is not now confined, as before, to one or two important centres, near the sphere of influence of some inspired worker, but is sprouting up on all sides and growing here as a full-grown tree and there as a promising seedling. The country seems now to have caught hold of the idea that something must be done for our widows—that they are a class that needs special care and attention from philanthropists. Even such a leader of orthodox and conservative opinion as Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore has been so far moved by the idea as to have devoted a lakh of rupees some years back, for helping Hindu widows. However, the most recent and in some respects the most important move in the direction is the step that the Governments of Bengal and Madras have lately taken in the matter. From an article in the *Madras Mail* reproduced in the *Statesman* of the 6th instant, it appears that the Madras Government has sanctioned a scheme submitted by Miss Carr, Inspectress of Girls' Schools in the province, for awarding a

number of scholarships to encourage the education and training of Hindu and Muhammadan widows with a view to their becoming teachers. The scholarships will vary from Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per mensem according to the form in the school which the holder may be studying in. At the same time provision is made for allowances of Rs. 5 per mensem to parents or guardians to enable such young widows to live under proper supervision in places other than their native towns or villages when the schools in their native towns or villages do not contain the required forms. From what Miss Carr writes in support of her scheme, she seems to be deeply impressed with the importance of the movement, and though only Rs. 500 or Rs. 600 is going to be spent in the first year, she says that if, in future, a few thousand rupees annually are required to make the necessary provision, she considers that it will be money most excellently spent. On this side of the country, the Bengal Government, as the readers of this paper must have read, has taken a similar step in the direction, and though it is not widows specially who will be profited by the scheme promulgated by the Government, the scheme itself is a direct result of the movement started a few years ago by Babu Sasipada Banurji for the education of Hindu widows. The Government action is at present confined to the opening of two classes for training lady-teachers at the Bethune College and the Brahmo Girls' High School. Two teachers, ladies who have already passed the teachership examination under the existing system, are to be appoined on a salary of Rs. 60 each to teach these classes and ten stipends of Rs. 4 each are to be granted to encourage students joining each class. But though the beginning is small, the movement will, no doubt, undergo developements if the kind care of the Government for our growing womankind is responded to by our people. Such a scheme was extremely needed after the closing of the Barahanagar Hindu Widows' Home. That useful institution was doing the very work which the Government has now taken up, and, as I have already said, the Government action is a direct result of the closing of the Home. Shortly after its abolition, the Commissioner of the Presidency Division, under orders from the Government of Bengal, invited Babu Sasipada Banurji to his presence and earnestly inquired whether it was possible to re-open it. He was assured by Mr. Banurji that the state of his health made it impossible for him to re-open it. The Government felt that the gap must be filled up as best it could be, and the present scheme is the result.

A short sketch of the early history of the widow movement may be interesting to the reader and may also afford some guidance to the present workers in the field. The first great man who did anything for widows was Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar. Though he latterly separated himself from all organised reform movements, Vidyasagar was originally a leading member of the Adi Brahma-Samaj and undoubtedly owed his reforming zeal to the inspiration of that early band of reformers. The same thing is true of another of our great workers, the late Babu Akshaykumar Datta. However,

the history of the great and far-reaching movement inaugurated by Vidyasagar is well-known. But important as his movement was, it solved only one of the problems connected with widows—how to get them married where marriage was possible and desirable. But in many cases marriage is neither possible nor desirable, and yet the condition of such widows is miserable in the extreme, and calls for the efforts of reformers and philanthropists. There is thus a larger problem than that of widow-remarriage—a problem that can be solved only by organised efforts to *educate* the widow. It is curious that Babu Kesavchandra Sen, notwithstanding the many-sidedness of his reforming activity, did not take up this large problem of the education of widows. He greatly helped the cause of widow-remarriage, but the education of widows formed no part of even that large program of reform which he planned and carried out to a great extent after his return from England. The first organised effort to educate widows seems to have been made by Babu Sasipada Banurji, who, in 1864, opened a little school in his house at Barahanagar for grown up widows and other ladies. This school did not live long, but the idea which thus struggled for expression and failed in the first attempt, remained like a living, though for a long time unfructifying, seed in the mind of the founder of the school, till it found an adequate expression in the establishment of the Home for Hindu Widows in 1887. The departure thus made from the line of the early reformers, was a most important one. As Mr. Caine wrote in 1890 in the *Abkari*, "By his Widows' Home he (Mr. Banurji) is solving one of the great social problems of India." The idea of widow remarriage, though still unpopular, had nevertheless become somewhat familiar by that time. There was a good deal of conservatism in it. It was only the transfer of a widow from one family to another, though in a changed capacity. But the idea of a widow leaving her home for a Boarding Institution managed by more or less heterodox reformers,—though along orthodox lines—was a revolutionary one. English philanthropists and high Government officials might favour it and help it on, but it could not succeed without the sympathy and good-will of the orthodox leaders of the native community. Mr. Banurji saw all this and earnestly sought the favour and co-operation of this important class. To a great extent he got what he wanted. It is gratiying to think that to the orthodox Pandit visitors of his Home, it seemed more like the holy *asramas* of the ancient *rishis* than like Christian Boarding Institutions with which it is identified in popular imagination. However, the internal history of this noble institution,—the system under which it was managed and the difficulties it encountered and overcame—all this deserves to be told in a way which cannot be attempted in this article. That history, when told, will surely serve as a guidance to future workers in the same direction. What I shall add to the foregoing sketch is a brief reference to a development of Mr. Banurji's movement along a line not attempted up to that time and not yet followed after Mr. Banurji gave it up for want of funds. It was the

grant of a number of stipends, through the agency of the local Hitakari Sabha, to some widow teachers at Barahanagar and some of the neighbouring villages,—teachers who would hold their classes in their own homes, imparting whatever knowledge they were competent to impart, to members of their sex,—whether little girls or grown up women. They might teach the primers, or read out to their pupils from such popular books as the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat* in Bengali. The teachers were required to submit a report of their work to Mr. Banurji at the end of each month, and their work was further inspected from time to time by the lady members of Mr. Banurji's family. The system exactly suited the conservative tastes of the orthodox, and must have been greatly appreciated. Both Miss Carr of Madras, and the Government of Bengal may take it into their consideration and give it a place in their respective schemes for the training of lady-teachers.

In conclusion, I shall barely mention some of the other results, direct or indirect, of Mr. Banurji's movement. Ramabai's Sarada Sadan is well-known and is doing excellent work. Then there are at Poona and at Madras institutions of a similar nature. The Christian missionaries also have taken up the idea and are working in the same line in their energetic though silent manner. The work done for widows at Mysore at the Maharani's School, and by the Arya Samaj and the Purity Society in the Punjab are also extensions of the same noble work. Even Mrs. Annie Besant, that zealous convert to and advocate of Hindu orthodoxy, feels that something must be done to educate the Indian widow, and we may soon expect to see the Theosophical Society taking some important step in the direction. Why should not, one naturally asks in this connection, the Mahakali Pathsalas, with their large hold on the orthodox community, do something in their own way? Meanwhile the Government action in the matter, both in Bengal and Madras, deserves the deepest sympathy and the most earnest co-operation of native reformers, as its success will depend entirely on such co-operation.

SASIPADA BANURJI AND INDIAN WIDOWS.

It has often been remarked that while the great leaders of the country's thought and life are one by one passing away, men with even a fraction of their energy and ability are not forthcoming to take their places. We seem to be just now passing through a state of temporary decadence or exhaustion of energy. One glaring instance of this sad phenomenon is the closing of Babu Sasipada Banurji's "Home for Hindu Widows,"—a truly melancholy event which took place the other day, but which has not yet been noticed by any of the newspapers of this province. The idea of closing it was, however, known in England among the English friends of Indian reform as recently as in March last, and I find a very ap-

preciative notice of the work just closed in the current May number of the *Indian Magazine and Review*, the organ of the National Indian Association. At the last Annual Meeting of the Association, Sir Steuart Bayley, our late Lieutenant-Governor, while speaking of girls' schools in India, referred to Babu Sasipada Banurji's work in the following terms :—" Referring to the Report, there is just one word I should like to say, and that is to echo what Sir Charles Stevens said, and to express my extreme regret that the Widows' Home in Calcutta is to be given up, not only because of its being given up, but because of the reason of its being given up. Mr. Sasipada Banurji, who, I am proud to say, is a friend of mine, is a man of thoughtful disposition, exceedingly kind and exceedingly useful, going about his work in a quiet, unassuming way, and doing a great amount of good. He is a man for whom I have the greatest admiration and respect, and it is a great grief to me that he has to give up his Home because of ill-health. The Home was specially useful, to my mind, because of the lines upon which it was conducted. There are a large number of girls' schools in India, as Mr. Dutt (Mr. R. C. Dutt), mentioned, but the line Mr. Banurji particularly took up was that of training, and specially, so far as he could do it, of training ladies to teach in these girls' schools. He had at one time some twenty-five widows under training in his house,—not all of them for tuition, some for domestic duties, but nearly all for tuition. I think it would be a very sad thing if this Home, that he has carried on for so many years, were to cease, and to be determined (?) because he is unable to carry on the duties, and if there is anything that one can do in the way of bringing influence to bear upon any one in a position to take it up, I should be very glad to assist myself, and to receive assistance from others."

Those who have had the pleasure of making Babu Sasipada's acquaintance and of observing the way in which he does his work, will bear witness that there is not a single word of exaggeration in what Sir Steuart said. Specially, Mr. Banurji's Widows' Home was not, as Sir Steuart has truly said, an ordinary girls' school. The lines upon which it was conducted were really new in this country. The training which the inmates received was a comprehensive one and the practical element in it,—the teaching of cooking and other household duties, and the culture of moral and religious feeling—decidedly preponderated over the merely academical. Nothing can be more sad than the closing of such an institution. I have spoken at the outset of the passing away of our great thinkers and workers. Babu Sasipada has not, indeed, yet passed away from us. But his health has been failing so much for the last few years, that it was impossible for him to continue the arduous labours implied in keeping up his institution. Lately he had been trying to find out some person or public body who could take up the work, and continue it according to his ideas, but he failed to find out such a successor. It is a thing, the significance of which deserves to be pondered over, that while there was no lack of support and encourage-

ment for the institution from the well-wishers of the movement, both native and foreign, specially the latter, there is so much lack of that inspiration for active usefulness which might lead some energetic person or persons to step into the place practically vacated by one of our ablest and most indefatigable workers, a worker whose one thought in life seems to have been the amelioration of the condition of our widows and our working men. There seems to be something extremely foul in the moral atmosphere of the country which counteracts the inspiring effect of the self-denying labours of our patriots. Shortly after the foundation of Mr. Banurji's institution, Mr. James Wilson wrote about it in the *Indian Daily News* of 9th March, 1888:—"The scheme is thus doubly interesting. First, it helps Hindu widows, who with the spread of education and better ideas now feel it hard to continue subject to the austerities of a widow's life and who wish to be more useful members of society, and, secondly, it attempts to supply a long-felt need in the cause of native female education and the want of trained female teachers."

It should be mentioned, however, that in the Home just closed Mr. Banurji only gave a form and an organised basis to an idea which had been in his heart ever since he joined the noble band of Indian reformers in his early life. So early as 1868, he trained his widowed niece, got her remarried under severe persecution by his relatives, and since then his house gave shelter to several Hindu widows, who received the same kind treatment from him and his sympathetic and extremely helpful wife. I shall close with another appreciative notice of the institution, one from our friend, the Honourable W. S. Caine, who wrote of the Home in 1890:—"By the Widows' Home, he (Mr. Banurji) is solving one of the great social problems of India."

In 1894, Babu Sasipada tried an extension of his work in a new and most useful line, and was, to a certain extent, successful. He promulgated a system of imparting education on an entirely national basis to widows and other ladies in their own homes. Students making satisfactory progress in their lessons or helping others to learn, were granted small stipends to encourage them in their labours. No fewer than fourteen centres of such instruction were established, and the work went on for two years. But like so many good works, it at last failed for want of support.

Though, however, no one in his native province seems to have caught fire from Babu Sasipada's noble example, sparks from his burning enthusiasm have, it is evident, fallen upon some of the other provinces of the country and are developing into living flames. The Saradasadan of Pandita Ramabai, though now a Christian institution, was founded on the same ideas that formed the basis of Mr. Banurji's institution. The Widows' Home lately established at Poona by Professor Karvi of Fergusson College and his wife, with the help of Dr. Bhandarkar, is also an indirect result of Mr. Banurji's labours. The one recently established at Madras owes its origin to Mr. Banurji's last visit (in 1895) to that city, and his

conversation with the friends of social reform there. Of the work at Bombay and Madras, Miss Manning thus wrote from Bombay before starting for London :—"At Poona I saw the Widows' Home started on a small scale by a few Hindu gentlemen. Mr. Karvi and his wife look after the widows, who mostly go to the High School at Poona by day. Mr. Karvi is a man of very great devotedness. Dr. Bhandarkar also assists. I think your Widows' Home has done great good not only to the widows in it, but by setting an example to Bombay and Madras." In 1893, when the late Maharaja of Mysore visited Calcutta, his Minister of Education, Mr. Iyengar, now Secretary, Maharani's College, visited Mr. Banurji's Home at Barahanagar and carried with him the idea of training widows. Of Mr. Banurji's work, he wrote :—"As a pioneer, and a successful pioneer, in this truly noble and unselfish work, Mr. S. P. Banurji is entitled to the gratitude of the present generation and of posterity." What Mr. Iyengar is doing to give practical effect to his appreciation of Mr. Banurji's work, is partly to be seen in the last printed account of the Maharani's College at Mysore, in which we read that "altogether the number of widows in the school is 37, of whom 9 are teachers, and the rest pupils." In the Punjab, one often hears of the memoers of the Arya Samaj and other reformers attempting to help Hindu widows in various ways.

But in our native province also the seeds sown by Babu Sasipada, have not, it seems, quite failed to take root. Though our own community seems to be utterly lethargic and apathetic, the Muhammadans, if recent newspaper reports are correct, are feeling the necessity of starting Homes for their widows, and organised effort is on foot in Calcutta to do something practical in this direction. There is some idea, it also seems, of opening a Widows' Home in connection with the Queen Victoria Memorial Fund, started by ladies. And then, the last though not the least, there is the Christian Zenana Mission, which has also followed the example, and as it is never in want of funds and workers, it is sure to succeed the most,—a hint for the leaders of Hindu society to take note of. So, after all, our patriot may have the consolation of thinking in his last days,—days of well-earned rest and retirement—that he is not without honour and appreciation even in his own native province.

THE BARAHANAGAR WIDOWS' HOME:

HOW IT WAS MANAGED.

In the issue of *New India* for February 12 last, I referred in an article on "Recent Developments of the Widow Movement" to Government action in Bengal and Madras as regards the training of female teachers and gave a sketch of the movement for the amelioration of widows, with special reference to the work done in this line by Babu Sasipada Banurji, the founder of the Barahanagar Widows' Home now closed. I showed that that Institution was the parent of all the similar institutions that have now cropped up throughout the country. Many more will no doubt rise up in future and extend the good work already done and being done. It may, however, be well both for the present and future workers in the line to hear something of the internal history of the parent Institution, though it is now no more. As I said in the article referred to, that history, when told, will surely serve as a guidance to future workers in the same direction. Anything like a complete history it is not in my power to write. But I shall try to give a few facts which will throw some light on the internal working of the Institution. Already the newly started homes are adopting some of the methods that were followed in the Barahanagar Home. A somewhat detailed statement of these methods may therefore be expected to do good.

A word or two as to the causes that have led to the closing of an Institution that brought light and sweetness to the hearts of so many widows, and worked with success for a period of thirteen years, may at first be said. It was not the want of pecuniary support, it was no lack of sympathy, that led to its closing. It was the want of a successor or a body of successors to keep up the work, when he who had begun it and done it so long became too old and weak to continue it, that was the real cause of its closing. Mr. Banurji had not been careless of training up a successor. His own daughter, the late Srimati Banalata Devi, the Editress of the ladies' magazine *Antapur*, had been most carefully educated and taught to take up and carry on the work when she should be called upon to do so, and she had already begun to help her father. But it pleased God to transfer her to a higher world before she had scarcely passed her teens. The effect of this most sad bereavement, which dashed to pieces some of Mr. Banurji's fondest hopes, may very well be imagined. But it did not, by any means, dishearten Mr. Banurji and prevent him from diligently searching after a successor. The search, however, proved quite fruitless,—a sad commentary on our vaunted public spirit. Not finding an individual successor, Mr. Banurji approached the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, offering to place the Institution, with his own dwelling house at Barahanagar, with gardens and a large compound, a guarantee of Rs. 100 a month in English subscription, besides a monthly Government grant of Rs. 75

at their disposal. But the Samaj, after long deliberation, refused to accept the offer on the ground that they could not undertake to work on the orthodox line which Mr. Banurji had been following and which he wished to be continued. After this disappointment, nothing remained to be done but to close the Institution, specially as Mr. Banurji's health had at that time completely failed. What the Government did, first to induce Mr. Banurji to keep up the work, and then, when they found it impossible, to follow it up to a certain extent in their own way, has already been related in my article referred to.

What the Barahanagar Widows' Home was and did for the young ladies who came to it for training, can be imagined only by those who have a clear idea of the sad lot of Hindu widows in general, specially those of the higher castes. That lot has often been painted in its true colours. I shall not describe it here. Those who know it will do well to keep it before their eyes while reading the following short description of the work that used to be done in the 'Home', and contrast the life that the widows lived there with that which they had left behind them when they entered the Institution.

The first feature of the Institution that I have to mention,—the feature that distinguished it at the very first sight from an ordinary Hindu home—was its regularity. Everything had its appointed hour, and the fair boarders were informed by a bell what they should do at particular times. To follow such a routine was itself a training, and though at first a galling necessity, it must have moulded many a wild and wilful spirit and given it an idea of the reign of unalterable law, physical and moral, under which we live, whether we know it or not, and a recognition of which is the first step towards a responsible life. The daily life at the Home was something like this: Punctually at 5-30 A.M, the bell rang for all the boarders to rise from their beds. At 6 all assembled for a morning service of an entirely unsectarian character. At 7 the girls had a little repast, the orthodox boarders taking it like all other meals in their own place. After the morning repast, the boarders prepared their lessons till 8-30, when they bathed in the tank within the compound. At 9 they took their breakfast. From 10 A.M. to 4 p. m. they attended school with half an hour's respite for launch. The evening meal was fixed for 5-30 p. m. in summer, and 5 in winter. After dinner the girls had an hour's time in the gardens or on the beautiful terrace of the house. At 7 p. M, all the girls began to prepare their lessons for the next day's school and went to rest at 9-30 P.M., the little girls retiring earlier.

The second feature to be mentioned is the unsectarian but thoroughly efficient moral and religious teaching that was imparted to the boarders. The service spoken of above was such as even the most orthodox Hindu could not take exception to, and yet it was touching and most instructive. I have spoken of it at some length in my article on "Social Reform and Personal Religion" in a previous issue of this paper, (inserted elsewhere in this book) specially of the eminently practical character of the discourses that formed not an

infrequent feature of the services. In this place I shall give two striking examples of the effects produced by these discourses. Once a girl felt the attractions of a beautiful tea-cup belonging to the family too strong for her and concealed it among her things. She was, however, in the habit of arranging all her favourite things by her bed-side, and after an interval brought out the concealed article and displayed it among her things. Mr. Banurji noticed it, but took no immediate steps. One day, however, he preached a discourse in the course of the service on touching other people's property. The effect was instantaneous. Though no name was mentioned, the offender was deeply moved and had no rest till she brought out the stolen article and placed it on a table with a letter expressive of the heartiest penitence. On another occasion, Mr. Banurji had distributed a quantity of warm cloth among a number of boarders newly admitted for making their jackets out of it. It was the practice, in the Home, for each boarder to make her own jackets and other clothing. An old boarder wanted to have a piece of cloth, for she said she had left her old jacket at home by mistake when she had gone there during the last holidays. Mr. Banurji gave her cloth for a new jacket, not suspecting that he was being duped by the girl. A few days hence he happened to preach a discourse on falsehood in conduct. The distress of the lying girl knew no bounds. She threw herself at the foot of Mr. Banurji and every one else in the Home, begging their pardon for having told a lie, and shedding tears in torrents. It cost the others not a little trouble to restore the penitent to peace. What a world of good must have been done in this manner? How many good seeds, bearing fruits throughout life, must have been sown in the tender hearts!

The third special feature that characterised the Hindu Widows' Home was the spirit of toleration that pervaded it. Ever since its opening, the Institution assumed a dual character. It was strictly orthodox on the one side, while on the other there was a separate department where Hindu guardians with advanced ideas could put their wards and where caste rules were not strictly observed. All the boarders were, no doubt, lodged originally in the same building, but with regard to food and drink the rules of Hindu orthodoxy were scrupulously observed by the widows whose guardians wanted them to preserve their caste. With the growth of the Institution, additions were made to the building, and with the increase in the number of orthodox boarders, an altogether separate building was bought and added to the old premises. In that the orthodox widows were lodged and fed, each according to her own ideas. Hindu orthodoxy, in short, received so much respect in this Institution, that even leaders of Brahmanic thought in Bengal freely recommended it to all classes of Hindus after having inspected it. Pandit Krishnahari Shiromani, one of the oldest leaders of Brahmanism in Bengal, who used to visit the Institution from time to time, recorded his opinion thus: "I was much pleased with the Hindu Widows' Home of Mr. S. Banurji. Hindu widows can live here, keeping in tact their religion and their

prescribed rules of conduct, and I was glad to find some living here in this manner. I noticed the purity observed and the excellent arrangements made for their board and lodging. Blessed is he who is so kind to helpless women. I now pray for the steady improvement of this worthy Institution." Pandit Shashadhar Tarkaratna, another orthodox Hindu Pandit, also recorded a similar opinion.

The fourth important feature of the Institution was the strict discipline observed therein. Every girl had some portion of the household duties entrusted to her. There was no cook; and the girls prepared their food by turns. One had charge of the store, two of serving the meal, and so on. The boarders were divided into two groups and in order to sharpen their sense of responsibility, accustom them to occupation and teach them regularity, their allotted work was arranged and superintended by a council of five in each group called the sisters' council, and the work changed hands every three months, so that all might go through the same process of training. Even the little children had particular tasks assigned to them. The two groups referred to above had two character-books kept by two elderly sisters of the council. These books produced a very good effect on the life and daily work of the girls. In times of illness girls were selected from the two groups to nurse the sick and minister to their wants.

The fifth important feature of the Home was the *practical* nature of the education that was imparted to the inmates. They indeed attended the school attached to the Home, and the studies pursued there were much the same as those in ordinary boys or girls' schools, but there was not that hard and first distinction between the classes in it which is seen in an ordinary school. Natural bent and aptitude were consulted and respected far more in it than elsewhere. If, for instance, a girl that belonged to a lower class, showed a progress in English, Bengali or any other branch which fitted her more for a higher class than that, she was freely allowed to attend that class in the hour in which that particular branch was taught. On the other hand, if one showed that she had little head for Mathematics, her backwardness in that branch was not allowed to hinder her progress in other branches, and so on. Besides the usual course of studies, lectures were given on Science, the Biography of eminent men and women, Sewing, Domestic Economy and Domestic Medicine. As to the practical and interesting nature of these lectures, I find a Headmaster of the school dwelling upon it in a pamphlet written after his retirement from the service of the school. He says that in the first lecture on History, which was given by Mr. Banurji, he exhibited a number of interesting articles like the following; a piece of burnt wood from the York Minster, which was destroyed by fire, a brick that formed part of a floor in ancient Rome, and the hair and sacred thread of Raja Rammohan Ray. Premising that everything had a history, Mr. Banurji explained the utility of studying the subject in such an easy and beautiful manner, that no one who listened to the lecture could ever forget it. His lecture on Gardening, the same authority says, was

so impressive, that girls evinced great interest and enthusiasm in the work after listening to it. Cooking has already been mentioned as a subject of instruction. Perhaps this Institution was the first to adopt it as such. To this was latterly added Gardening. Babu Sasipada placed his whole garden at the disposal of the boarders and also allotted two plots of ground to the two groups into which the girls were divided. He offered to pay for all the greens and fruits that they could either grow in their respective plots or gather from the existing trees. These products, when bought by him, were used in the Home. An account of the money thus realised was regularly kept by the heads of the groups and the proceeds were devoted to charitable purposes, each group contributing its respective share. The last though not the least thing worth mention in this connection, is the weekly meeting which the boarders used to hold among themselves, and at which papers on subjects of general interest were read and discussed. These meetings proved very beneficial to them.

The last though the most important feature of the Institution that I shall mention was the parently care and affection that the boarders received from Mr. and Mrs. Banurji. Every one called them 'father' and 'mother' and confided to them, specially to the 'father,' their little complaints, grievances and difficulties. The response was full and hearty. Nothing satisfied Mr. Banurji but direct dealing with every heart that beat under his roof. The Home was not one only in name, it was a real home to the inmates. Such was the impression made on the girls by the kindness received by them, that whenever Mr. Banurji had to leave for a tour and gathered the the girls to bid them farewell, a wail of lamentation arose from them and nothing could restore them to perfect rest but his return. Thus were the usual rigours of boarding life—rigours that impart a sort of roughness and hard-heartedness to many who have been trained in ordinary boarding houses—softened by the infusion of heartiness from the great heart of the founder and manager, and the way shown to future workers in the field to solve one of the most difficult problems of the age.

TEMPERANCE WORK, PAST AND PRESENT.

The *Indian Messenger* of the 15th February last says: "It is time that the danger signal should be hoisted. The latest excise report discloses a most dangerous state of things. It is stated that the last year showed the largest revenue on record in Bengal from drinks and drugs. But that is not all. Not only did the excise receipts exceed 3¾ lackhs of rupees, the largest total of any previous year, but the officials anticipate that the receipts of the year now begun will be even larger than those of the year just ending." Again, a correspondent of the *Indian Social Reformer* of Bombay writes

in its issue of the same date: "The Delhi Darbar has brought a very unwelcome news to Mr. Caine and the party he represents. In a week Mr. Caine's Indian friends—representatives of the Native Press—consumed wines and spirits worth Rs. 1500! What a convincing comment on the earnestness and sincerity of our public agitations and the consistency between our actions and orations!"

The current method of agitation, both social and political, the method that consists in writing, speaking, memorialising and holding conferences, cannot be expected to yield better results than we see around us. It is a system that involves a maximum of noise and a minimum of work, and ignores the most important element in all real reform work—personal influence. The personal character of the agitator—the speaker or the writer—is kept conveniently concealed behind the volume of dust he raises, and the effect of his work, its influence on persons—on personal character—is also kept in the dark and does not come forward to belittle his performances by its insignificance. If the Temperance and Purity Associations scattered throughout the country were called upon to state in their reports how many of their members went about visiting the victims of drink and impurity, and how many converts they made in the course of the year under report, most such reports would never come out at all. But personal work, work by persons on persons—the actual grappling with evil by those who would remove it—is what is really wanted in all fields of work. Those who have no liking for such direct work, but confine themselves to speaking and writing, should not deceive themselves and others; they should know that it is speaking and writing that they want for their own sake, and not the sacred ends of which these are only means—secondary means after all. Our good friend Mr. Caine will of course take a lesson from the state of things indicated in the extracts I have made above, and will, I hope, henceforth insist upon more real and tangible work than mere verbiage from the avowed friends and supporters of the holy cause espoused by him.

What I mean by personal work I shall illustrate by a brief reference to the work of a number of excellent men who worked in the last generation, specially of one whose work in other departments of social reform I have mentioned in some of the recent issues of this paper. Rev. C. H. A. Dall, Rev. J. Paine, Babus Pyaricharan Sarkar and Kesavchandra Sen and Rev. K. S. Macdonald were the chief temperance workers in Calcutta in the sixties. The drunkenness of those days were—I shall not say deeper, for the excise report referred to would contradict me, but—more palpable, more obtrusive than that of today, and so touched the hearts and quickened the hands of those pioneers. They found a worthy coadjutor in Babu Sasipada Banurji of Barahanagar. The woes of his native town, caused by drink and drunkards, rent his young heart—for he was only twenty-four then—and he launched into his work with singular ardour and energy. A Temperance Society was established at the town on the 27th March, 1864, and Mr. Banurji became its Secretary from the second sitting, the Secretary first selected having been one of his cousins.

One day, without any previous arrangement, but as a spontaneous expression of the spirit which animated the Secretary in his temperance labours, he offered a prayer before the commencement of the proceedings. It was the first public prayer ever offered at the place, and a very fruitful one, for it was continued meeting after meeting and soon led to the establishment of a Brahmo Samaj at the village. The meetings of the society, however, were the least important indication of the work thus commenced. The young Secretary brought himself face to face with the evil he had resolved to combat. He visited both individual drunkards in their homes and drinking clubs when they were in full swing. He preached to them on the evils of drinking. He caused essays to be written on these evils and awarded prizes to successful competitors. He also organised a 'band of hope', a union of boys pledged to temperance principles. He threw himself heart and soul into the work, and gave his days and nights to it. Such hearty and energetic work could not but have its effect. The whole town was agitated to its very bottom; the temperance movement became the talk of the whole place and the terror of the drunkard.

More tangible results soon followed. The victims of drink began, one by one, to give up their habits and many of them even joined their benefactor in the good work that he had taken up as his mission. The report of the success that had attended the efforts of the noble band of temperance workers reached the organs of Anglo-Indian opinion of those days and the *Friend of India* responded to the *Harkara's* attack on the total abstainers in the following terms: "The *Harkara* handles the total abstainers of Calcutta with some severity, but not perhaps with more than they deserve. The extreme views these gentlemen take upon the subject are simply absurd. Temperance is one thing, total abstinence another. And if there is a country to which the latter doubtful virtue is ill adapted, it is India. Here the enervation of mind and body induced by the climate imperatively demands stimulants, and taken in moderation, they are decidedly beneficial. The advocacy of the docrine of abstinence should be made penal within the tropics." Inspite, however, of opposition from such unexpected quarters, the good work prospered, and in the very first year of its existence the Barahanagar Temperance Society converted no fewer than twenty young men to its creed. This fact was acknowledged by Mr. Caine in the *Abkari* of October, 1891 in the following terms: "In 1864 Mr. Banurji established the Barahanagar Temperance Society, now the Working Men's Club, one of the oldest Temperance organisations of India. During the first year of its existence, upwards of twenty young men were, by Mr. Banurji's rare powers of influence, rescued from paths of intemperance and vice." Gradually most of the known drunkards of the place gave up their ruinous habits and many of them joined a Reading Club which Mr. Banurji established on the very site where there was formerly a Drinking Club. To be more precise, the Drinking Club itself was converted into a Reading Club. When the Working Men's Club of Barahanagar was established (1870)

total abstinence was made a condition of membership, and great and far-reaching were the results of this combined movement for Temperance and the improvement of the working classes. In every meeting there came forward fresh numbers of men, confessing their intemperate habits and taking temperance pledges. Hardly less touching were the letters that those wrote to Mr. Banurji whom he had saved from the clutches of the dreadful enemy and its associates. But anything beyond a bare mention of them would unusually lengthen my article. I shall, however, refer to two features of the movement before I close. The first is the thorough-going consistency with which Mr. Banurji worked. He not only counted it a sin to so much as touch any kind of intoxicating drink or drug, but he gave up the rather innocent stimulant of smoking tobacco to set an example of self-denial before those among whom he worked. He was once visiting the bedside of an intemperate man, a school-master laid up with complaints brought about by his evil habits, and was dwelling upon the importance of correcting bad habits. He was met by a friend of the patient with the retort that the reformer himself had not been quite able to give up long-formed habits, pointing to the *huka* he was then smoking. Mr. Banurji at once laid down the pipe and never after touched any. Not to encourage even indirectly the manufacture of toddy, he refused to lease the date-trees with which his orchard abounded, for he knew what use would be made of the juice extracted from them. Such examples could not but have a most healthy effect on his neighbours.

It can be easily imagined that such earnest and energetic activity on the part of Mr. Banurji must have called forth a corresponding opposition from the friends and advocates of drink. And that was exactly the case. The young temperance worker was attacked on all sides by those whose pleasure or interest was affected by his labours. Taunts and abuse were hurled on him from all quarters, and the revelry at drinking clubs and wine-shops received an added zest from the fresh excitements furnished by reviling and defaming the Secretary of the Temperance Society. Attempts at sullying his good name by libellous reports and even putting him into physical difficulties were discussed by the infuriated priests and worshippers of Bacchus. Even the meetings of the society were occasionally disturbed by visits from drunkards and wine-sellers. One day, no less a person than a drunken Munsiff broke into the proceedings and diversified them with his wild effusions. On another occasion a wine-seller interposed at their commencement and calmly suggested to the members that those who had ceased to be his customers should settle their accounts with him and pay his dues without delay! Such were the circumstances under which the Secretary worked. But he went on with undiminished zeal and courage. One day he formed the bold project of visiting a very fashionable rendezvous just in front of his own house—a place from which a continuous stream of clamorous abuse flowed every night on his devoted head. He entered it one night when it was in full swing.

Perhaps he had thought that his words might touch and re-awaken the humanity that lay in the hearts of the drunkards hidden under a thick covering of the fumes of drink. But he had apparently miscalculated the power of wine, at any rate in moments of actual drunkenness. On finding their enemy in their very midst, the drunkards enclosed him in a compact circle and poured a volume of the foulest abuse on his head. They, however, left his person uninjured and allowed him to come out safely from their dangerous grasp.

On another occasion, Mr. Banurji exposed himself unintentionally to a danger far more serious than the above. He was returning home from his office in Calcutta in a boat previously hired for the purpose by himself and a number of respectable fellow-villagers. But before taking their seats in it he and his friends found it occupied by a wine-seller's servant carrying a basketful of bottled wine. Neither the servant nor the wine gave them any physical trouble. But they objected, on moral grounds, to carry the wine in their boat. Accordingly the man, with his objectionable burden, was turned out of the boat, much to his annoyance. He reached Barahanagar and saw his master, a local dealer, before the boat reached the place. The priest of Bacchus had meanwhile hatched his plan for rewarding the reformers for their zeal. After a stormy meeting with them at the landing place, during which, in the midst of blows and abusive words he accused them of murdering his man and throwing his wine into the river, the trader brought a case of *gumi* (abduction) against them. Mr. Banurji and his friends were forced to spend one night under police surveillance. Next day, the man represented to be abducted and possibly murdered being produced alive and unharmed, led to the dismissal of the case and the release of the temperance workers. It is needless to add that the wine-dealer had himself kept his man concealed.

Trials of a very different nature, but scarcely less sore and painful to the teetotaler and temperance reformer, were also numerous, but were most patiently and heroically borne by Mr. Banurji. In many a family and social circle, specially of English friends, he was urged to partake of wine. But inspite of the extreme difficulty of the situation, of resisting the importunities of friends otherwise bearing the highest characters, and of asserting one's own singularity as a temperance worker of an uncompromising type, Mr. Banurji always proved strictly faithful to his temperance pledge. He not only touches no wine himself, but refrains from what some people seem to consider as the innocent practice of providing wine to those who are in the habit of drinking it. An anecdote in this connection may be interesting. On one occasion, a high English official was his guest in his Barahanagar house. Ice, in those days, was rare and very dear, and so he had asked an English friend living at Barahanagar to send him some ice and lemonade for the entertainment of the high official. This friend was very obliging, and sent him not only what he wanted, but a caskful of wines of various sorts. Mr. Banurji, of course, did not touch or use any of these presents in his hospitality

to his friend, and sent them back to the too kind friend who had provided them, politely thanking him for the same. Would that all reformers were as uncompromising as the one I speak of!

After my long narrative, which, I hope, will be interesting to all and instructive to workers in the field of social reform, I must repeat what I have said in substance at the beginning of my article, namely that temperance work, and in fact all reform work, to be effective, must be *personal* to a large extent—must proceed from the heart of earnest, prayerful and enthusiastic persons, and be directed to persons, —persons marked out for correction—and steadily kept in view. Reform societies must be unions of such earnest workers, or they are good for nothing.

SOCIAL REFORM AND PERSONAL RELIGION.

It may seem to a superficial thinker that social reform has no vital or essential relation to personal religion,—that one can successfully effect reforms in society without having any more religion than is implied in the wish to do good to his fellow-beings in certain respects. But a close inquiry into the moving springs of those who have been the truest reformers in any country and in any age, will show the error of this view. It will be seen that the secret of their succcess, of the courage shown in carrying out their ideas in the face of dire opposition, and of the patience and perseverance with which unpopularity, privations and persecutions have been endured by them, was a firm faith in a God of truth and love and in themselves as instruments in his righteous and almighty hand. On the other hand, those who have ventured upon attempts at reform without such faith, have invariably shrunk from persecutions, been frightened and thwarted by opposition, have contradicted and compromised themselves and thus shown themselves to be men without backbones. As I write, the picture of many a religious and social reformer who underwent the humiliating and degrading process of a sham atonement for 'sins' which his conscience approved rather than condemned, rises before my eyes. Scarcely less instructive is the image of not a few reformer, who, because he ventured to be so far humane as to remarry a widowed relative of his, in opposition to orthodox opinion, forthwith adopted the most orthodox modes of living in order to commend himself to those whom he had offended, and to get credit for a mode of thinking for which internally he cared a straw. Cases of such backsliding are rather numerous in these days in the country. True reformers are men of a very different stamp. They act from a living faith in God, and for praise or blame, reward or punishment, look to him alone. In preachers of religion this faith necessarily shows itself in their utterances and is soon found out. In men of action, in men who are required to do more than speak,—personal religion often remains hidden and undiscovered,

and can be found out only by a close observation of their daily lives. Such a man is the one to whom I have made frequent references in my recent articles on social reform in the columns of this journal. I have, in my previous articles on the subject, given brief accounts of his work in connection with social reform. I shall, in this, give the reader some idea of the inner springs of the man's life. On this subject I write, not merely from records to which I have access, but also from a somewhat intimate personal knowledge of the subject of my narrative and of his family, having been connected with it from my early youth and got many opportunities of observing the private life of its members.

Babu Sasipada Banurji's deep interest in religion and even his conversion to Theism from the polytheistic faith of his boyhood date from his early youth. I have narrated in a previous article how he was dissatisfied with the *mantra* into which his family *guru* had initiated him in his twentieth year and how he had changed in a novel ceremony of re-initiation at which the *guru* gave him the theistic *mantra* of '*Anando Brahmeti*' from the 'Bhrigu Valli' of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. But this interest in personal religion and this conversion to Theism were not effected by the influence of any reforming body like the Brahma Samaj, which he had not yet joined, but were the result of a free development of faith in the young man's soul. His connection with the Samaj dates from attending one of the fiery discourses of Babu Kesavchandra Sen in its early days, which led the young Brahmana to publicly discard his badge of caste and *deva* worship. But with a healthy conservatism, very unusual in a youth, which has stuck to him and shown itself in various ways throughout the whole of his reforming career, the young reformer underwent no initiation on the occasion of his joining the reformed church, for he believed that his initiation into Theism had already been performed by his family *guru*, to whom, though belonging to the orthodox body, Mr. Banurji has always paid the honours of a spiritual father. This introduces what I shall speak of as the first characteristic of Mr. Banurji's religion—its singularly universal and unsectarian nature. Notwithstanding all the reforms he has carried out and taken an active part in, he has always regarded himself a Hindu—a reformed Hindu, if you will—and called himself so; but he has ever believed, and not only believed theoretically, but shown in practical life, that truth is confined to no church or sect. He has not only sat at the feet of an orthodox *guru* inspite of all his bold heterodoxies, but devotees of all sects have always been welcome guests at his house, and he has unreservedly and enthusiastically joined in their devotions. While in England, he joined in the prayers of various Christian denominations and preached from their pulpits. Though adhering to M. Sen's progressive movement, Mr. Banurji never sympathised with the former's exclusion of conservative ministers, bearing the badge of caste, from Brahma Samaj pulpits, and in 1867 he accomplished the astounding feat of simultaneously placing the two rival Brahma leaders, Maharshi Devendranath and

Brahmananda Kesavchandra, as well as a most conservative minister, the late Babu Becharam Chaturji, who had not discarded his Brahmanical thread, on the pulpit of the Samaj at Barahanagar. This took place when the conflict between the two parties was raging most furiously in Calcutta, and feelings between them were most bitter. On two other occasions he brought together the above two rival leaders and placed them on his family pulpit. In 1873 Mr. Banurji established the Sadharan Dharma Sabha, a religious union in which preachers of all religions were allowed to preach, and did preach, their respective religions without attacking other faiths. This movement failed to enlist the sympathy even of some advanced Brahmas, and the Brahma Samaj has not yet advanced far enough to actively favour such wide toleration and practical universality, however loud may be its sentimental advocacy of these principles. It remained for the most advanced and enlightened country in the world, the United States of America, to realise Mr. Banurji's idea, some years later, in the Chicago Parliament of Religions.

The second trait of M. Banurji's religion is its intense practicality. While the Brahma Samaj was yet busy with the mere destruction of idolatry and caste, and had not learnt to appreciate the value of anything more practical than the emotional worship of God, Mr. Banurji had inaugurated almost all the philanthropic movements at Barahanagar with which his name is identified,—movements which failed to draw the hearty sympathy of Brahma leaders till Babu Kesavchandra Sen's return from England and his establishment of the Indian Reform Association. The famine of 1866, the cyclone of 1867 and the cholera outbreak of 1870 also brought into great prominence the practical aspect of our reformer's religion.

The third characteristic of Mr. Banurji's religion that I shall mention is the great importance he attaches to prayer. Men of action are apt to be taken as trusting too much to their own individual strength. That may be true of those whose work lies outside the soul. Even such are liable to suffer and fail on account of over-egotism and the despondency that comes with failures. Mr. Banurji, however, has always believed that his work is soul-work,—that no reform is real or lasting unless it proceeds from a reform of the heart. He also believes that man in himself has no power, all power belonging to God and proceeding from him. He has therefore trusted in prayer and prayer alone all his life. From those early days of intense solicitude, described in Mr. James Wilson's tract on *Female Education in Bengal*, during which he, himself little older than a child, prayed fervently for light and strength to make his child-wife a help in his reforming career then just beginning, to the present hour, when, in the maturity of age, youthful fervency has deepened into constant companionship with God, prayer has preceded, accompanied and closed every step taken either in public or private life. Mr. Banurji believes that nothing is impossible to prayer—that difficulties are difficulties only so long as prayers are not offered with real faith, and that before the prayer of faith they

vanish in the air. On the other hand, he believes in nothing that does not proceed from prayer. In the ordinary medical treatment of diseases, for instance, he has little or no faith, and in his own case he does not place himself under the system unless forced to do so by the importunities of the other members of his family. He believes that cures can be effected and remedies discovered by faith and prayer, and many are the instances in which he believes and is believed to have worked miracles of faith in curing diseases.* I must confess that to me Mr. Banurji's faith in such cures seems to belong to a pre-scientific stage, but I must give him the credit of being thoroughly sincere, and also admit that the instances referred to are really marvellous and inexplicable by the known laws of Nature. However, the great importance which Mr. Banurji attaches to prayer leads him to make family devotions a daily habit in his home—a rather uncommon phenomenon in Hindu homes even of the reformed school. These family devotions—I have known them to have continued for nearly thirty years—are accompanied with fervent singing and frequent discourses—discourses which have quietly but most effectively influenced and moulded the lives of the inmates of the house, including the young ladies who, for a long series of years, made the Hindu Widows' Home their home. The quiet influence of these family discourses, continued from year to year through half a century, might alone furnish matter for a most interesting and edifying history. I must add, as a personal testimony, that Mr. Banurji's prayers are short and couched in simple words, and have nothing of verbal eloquence in them. But they are deeply infused with the eloquence of heartfelt feeling. This characteristic of them drew the appreciation of a man infinitely better than the present writer,—of the late Babu Ramtanu Lahiri, one of the most pious Bengalis of the reformed school.

Closely allied to his prayerfulness is Mr. Banurji's habit of constant self-examination and his consequent humility. He often asks his friends to tell him frankly what defects they see in him, and likes to be accused in his very face. Once, when he had sat to conduct the Samaj service on the Barahanagar pulpit, he remembered that on the previous day he had said some hard words, very rare in him, to a debtor who had put him off again and again even in his direst difficulties. He at once came down from the *vedi* and ran frantically to his debtor's house to ask his pardon before undertaking to lead the devotions of his brethren. The offended gentleman was not at home, but nevertheless the self-accused offender knelt down in his room and prayed fervently, confessing his sin, before he came and resumed his sacred duty. On another occasion, on a birthday, while in Calcutta, he went about in a humble spirit, visiting some of his friends and asking them to pardon him for any offence he might have given them. To cultivate humility, to forget that he is a high-caste Brahmana,—so very difficult even for a reformer to

* For some such instances the reader may see my *Indubala: A Domestic Picture*, chap. I.

forget—Mr. Banurji has sometimes entered, voluntarily and uninvited, into the ranks of charity paupers taking their meals in an *annachhatra* and partaken freely of the homely fare provided for them. This may seem superfluous for one who has ever been the friend of working people and has always freely partaken of their joys and sorrows, their labours and their sports, and has often been at the bedside of the disease-striken poor including even his *methar*, the cleanser of his privy. But it is from those who do much that most is demanded. It is curious, but also most true, that those who are the most hard on themselves, are the most forbearing to others. This is true also of the subject of my narrative. Babu Sasipada Banurji, as a reformer and public man, has had often, though quite unwittingly, to hurt the susceptibilities of not a few, and make them his revilers and active presecutors. But he has never retaliated such treatment, but has rather taken every opportunity to do good to his persecutors. For instance, Mr. Banurji did not take any steps against the man who, as said in a previous article, brought a false and malicious charge of *gumi* or abduction against him, though he was urged to do so by many of his friends. But this is only one of cases in Mr. Banurji's life too numerous to be mentioned in an article. He has always literally followed Christ's teaching to turn the left cheek to the man who would smite on the right. The inevitable result of such conduct has been, as always happens in the world, that his opponents have, of their own accord, perceived their own mistakes, and come to him to ask pardon or make peace. In this manner, Mr. Banurji has often disarmed opposition to the movements undertaken by him. However, in all such instances Mr. Banurji has felt only the grace of God glorified.

The last characteristic of Mr. Banurji's religion I shall mention is his faith in the ever-active providence of God. He believes that his whole life is under the direct leading of Providence, and that all the trials and difficulties he has met with, and both his failure and successes, are ordained by the Divine hand. Many a time he has resolved upon doing a good thing, and proceeded to do it, and the accomplishment has seemed near at hand; but, all on a sudden, the thing hoped for has escaped him—gone to a distance too great for fervent hope, though remaining as an object of faith and prayer. The work has seemed more like that of an evil spirit than of an angel of God. But nevertheless, the prize has come back after years—exactly in the same form in which it appeared first, and hope, long suspended, has revived, and faith, humble and resigned, has become jubilant. Mr. Banurji's life is full of such incidents—incidents which he loves to remember and speak of again and again with fervent thankfulness. They furnish rich materials for an instructive biography, if any should at all be written. I have no time and space to tell them here. I shall close by only repeating the truth that it is by such living faith in an ever-living and ever-active Providence, making for all that is true, good and beautiful in Nature and Society, that the sacred work of social reform can be done here or elsewhere.

SASIPADA BANURJI AND THE SADHARAN DHARMA SABHA.

In my article on "Social Reform and Personal Religion" I showed how essential personal piety is to the character of a true social reformer, and by way of illustration brought in the religious life of Babu Sasipada Banurji as a typical reformer of the true stamp. I mentioned a few traits of his religion and illustrated them by a few anecdotes from his life. Perhaps some readers will like to hear more of the man I described, specially of the novel movement he inaugurated, the Sadharan Dharma Sabha, whose ideal was realised on a grand scale in the Chicago Parliament of Religions. I showed in the article referred to, that the movement arose out of an unusually broad spirit of toleration and universality that has characterised Mr. Banurji's life and doings throughout his long career. I may add that another trait of his character—the love of peace—helped a great deal in the inauguration of the movement. While yet a child, he was not only above the childish love of fighting and quarrelling, but he interposed now and again in the quarrels of his boy companions, settled their disputes and reconciled angry combatants. This love of peace and peace-making naturally grew with years and deeply tinged the religious feelings and practical life of the man. Living in the midst of low class neighbours, both Hindus and Musalmans, in this Barahanagar home, he had often to place himself between two furious combatants and lull them to peace by long efforts of sympathetic persuasion, sometimes satisfying, at his own cost, the pecuniary claims of one of the parties which the other ignored. The same thing had to be done much oftener in his own home and the Home for widows, where such diverse characters were united under one roof. Far more strenuous were the efforts that he had to make in settling the differences of enlightened and pious men, with their ideas and individualities highly developed, in the different sections of the Brahma Samaj and in different Brahma families, both in his individual capacity and as a prominent member of the Arbitration Committee of 1874. In the same year, an organisation called the Theistic Union was formed, at Mr. Banurji's suggestion for the promotion of unity and good feeling among Brahmas of all, sections, recognising the equal rights of all to liberty of thought and action. The late Babu Nobinchandra Ray, who had lately been transferred to Calcutta from Lahore, was the Secretary of this new organisation. From this body was started the *Samadarsi*, a monthly religious journal, under the editorship of Pandit Sivanath Sastri. Since the establishment of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Mr. Banurji's strong desire for peace and co-operation among the three sections of the Samaj led him to suggest the foundation of the 'Brahma Sammilani,' which has done some good work in the direction during the last few years. The skill possessed by the gentleman in

welding contending elements into union, is something marvellous. The secret lies in a deep-seated feeling of sympathy which enables the peace-maker to see at once, and take up for the time being, the standpoints of the persons approached. They feel that they are understood and sympathised with and that what they are told to do proceeds from a sincere friend. This makes their surrender and reconciliation with their opponents an easy affair.

It was quite in the nature of things that the Sadharan Dharma Sabha movement, with its deep emphasis on harmony, should be inaugurated by such a lover of peace in public and private life. The movement aimed at the union and mutual co-operation of the various religious bodies of the country without, at the same time, any surrender of their peculiar doctrines and practices. There is a kind of harmony which some people seek,—a harmony which makes light of individual or communal peculiarities. It wants that the common element or elements in all divergent systems should alone be held important. It proceeds upon a sort of scepticism as to the truth of opinions not held by all or by the majority. Mr. Banurji's idea of harmony has always differed from such an idea. He has never been ashamed of his own peculiar ideas and of his connection with a particular church or sect. But without the least unfaithfulness to his own individuality, he has nevertheless held that the individuality of others—both persons and communities—should be respected. Truth is indeed one and universal, however different may be the forms it assumes in different countries and different systems. But truth exists, in most cases, in so close a connection with these forms, that in trying to separate it from its embodiments we are often apt to lose it. Up to a certain stage of mental and spiritual development, the surrender of the forms seems equivalent to a surrender of the truth itself. Any real union and co-operation of different religious bodies, therefore, implies that they should respect not only the truth held in common among them, but also the forms, however different, in which the common truth is embodied. But the common element of all religions is itself a changing, ever-increasing thing, so to speak. Its discovery is determined by the intellectual and spiritual growth of the discoverer. With the enlargement of his field of vision he sees more and more of common elements in widely divergent systems. As his insight grows more and more subtle, he discovers the essential unity of doctrines which appear antagonistic to superficial observation. How much more truth, for instance, do the Brahmas of the present day see in the established creeds than when they began their reforming work! How much more reverent they have become towards these systems, since the days of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha, without, at the same time, ceasing to be Brahmas! Thus there is much deeper unity among religions than can be clearly defined by the intellect, and our sympathy and co-operation with other religious bodies than our own ought not be based on and determined by the few principles of unity that our slowly growing intellects may define at any stage of our progress. This or some-

thing like this must have been felt by Babu Sasipada Banurji when he conceived the foundation of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha. It was curious that though only a plain man of action, without any of the pretensions of a thought-leader, he yet conceived an idea so novel, so uncommon, and yet indicative of so deep an insight into human nature, that for any approach to it we must go as far back in history as the days of the Emperor Akbar, under whose imperial orders, Hindu, Musalman, and Christian preachers met together and freely expounded their respective faiths. We have no detailed record of the proceedings of these imperial assemblies. Perhaps they were the work of a single broad and sympathising soul far in advance of his time, and did not evoke any response in the assembled representatives of the opposed creeds. In the last century, there have been many attempts at the union of various religious bodies on a common platform, such, for instance, as the Free Religious Association of America and the Theistic Society founded in England at the time of Babu Kesavachandra Sen's visit to that country. Raja Rammohan Ray's Brahma Samaj also seems to have been, in its first form, such a union of various religious bodies, for, we hear of Eurasian lads singing hymns there now and then. But all these attempts at religious union proceeded upon clearly defined principles of unity, and ignored points of difference. In joining these unions, the members of the different religious bodies were understood as forgetting for the time being the doctrines peculiar to them, however true and valuable they might hold them to be. In the meetings held under the auspices of these movements, the assembled representatives of the different faiths could speak of such things only as were held in common by all. Any unguarded reverting to or emphasis on one's peculiarties would be felt as a jarring element and either openly or secretly resented. Babu Sasipada Banurji justly felt that the purposes of universal religion could not be rightly served by unions under such conditions. If men of various faiths were to be gathered in the same hall and encouraged to fraternise with one another, the spiritual atmosphere of such a hall must not be made too close. It must be such as every one, with all his idiosyncrasies of belief and manner, could freely breathe in. If fraternisation meant anything, it meant, or, at any rate, involved a respect for and toleration of a brother's peculiarities. The only limitations to each one's freedom that could be laid down were that no one should attack another. Hostile feelings, either in the speaker or in the hearers, could and should be avoided. On such extremely broad and highly rational bases, therefore,—bases which no previous organization had ventured to build upon,—Mr. Banurji established his Sadharan Dharma Sabha at Baranagar in 1873.

As to the actual working of the Sabha I shall make a few extracts from contemporary records. The *Indian Daily News* of December 15, 1873, wrote about it: "It is a common platform for Christians, Hindus, Muhammadans and Brahmos, all of whom can join it without ignoring their own religion. Universal truths are preached, and practical teaching imparted in the weekly meetings of this Sabha.

The platform is also open for religious teachers of every denomination to expound their own views without attacking or vilifying any existing faith. The world is advancing towards such an ideal. Fifty years ago, such an attempt would have been thought futile, but now it is not only practicable, but a reality both in the East and the West. There is much to be said in favour of the principle of the movement, but its acceptance with the public will necessarily be a work of time." The *Barahanagar Samachar*, in one of its issues of the time, referred to a meeting of the Sabha in the following terms: "A meeting of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha was held on the 8th *Ashar* last. On this occasion a Moulavi from Calcutta was to have lectured, but he was unavoidably prevented from attending. Many Hindus, Muhammadans and Brahmos were present at the meeting. The number of Muhammadans present was about forty, one of whom delivered a nice address on the 'Essence of Muhammadanism.' He also expounded many of the principles on which the Sadharan Dharma Sabha is founded. An Urdu hymn, composed on the occasion, was sung at the meeting. Every one present expressed great satisfaction at the address and the hymn. A special feature of the meeting was the presence of a number of orthodox Hindu professors, who expressed themselves to be greatly pleased with the principles of the Sabha." The same paper reproduces a *nagar-sankirtan* (a hymn of praise sung in the streets) newly composed and sung by the Sabha in the course of a procession. The words are most appropriately chosen and breathe the lofty ideal of religious unity which the Sabha placed before it. The music too must have been very sweet.

The two main features of the movement will be clearly seen from the above extracts. They were, first, a spiritual union, held every week, of the followers of various religions on the basis of commonly accepted principles—a union in which Divine service and other spiritual exercises took place and were joined in by all; secondly, a platform for the preaching of diverse opinions by their advocates—a platform where the most perfect freedom and toleration were allowed consistently with brotherly feeling and general co-operation, for no one was allowed to vilify or attack the beliefs and practices of another. The harmonious way in which the two schemes combined in the main object of the Sabha worked together, was wonderful and bespeaks not a little tact and skill on the part of the organiser and supporter of the movement.

In 1876, the "Barahanagar Institute" popularly known as "Sasi Babu's Hall,"—a beautiful public hall built mainly at Mr. Banurji's own expense and partly by suoscriptions gathered mostly from friends in England, "realised in brick aud mortar the ideal of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha," as a writer said in the *Indian Mirror*. The same writer continues: "The idea of catholicity is stamped on the Institute from whatsoever point it may be viewed......A striking feature of Babu Sasipada's life is the prominence he gives to practical work in all that he puts his hand to. Speculative devotion and practical reform go hand in hand and thus we find the Hall is consecrated not merely to

religious purposes, but used for diverse other good objects. In fact his cardinal principle is that every good work is part and parcel of religion, and that it is no detraction from the sacredness of a church or chapel, but rather an addition to its glory, to keep it open for all really useful and benevolent purposes. The Institute is accordingly used during the day as the school-room for the Female Boarding School and class-room for the Hindu Widow's Home. In the evening, classes are held in it for instruction to working men and boys. The Institute has a Reading Room attached to it, where there are a good number of English and Bengali newspapers and periodicals. Meetings are also held in the hall of the Institute to promote objects of local improvement and to advance the cause of religion and morals." I may mention in this connection, that Mr. Banurji, who was one of the founders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, and was mainly instrumental in giving it the name it bears, tried to found its *Mandir* on the same liberal principles on which his Institute is founded, that is, to make it a centre of everyday religion, in all its phases, and not to confine it, like other churches, to Sunday religion of a purely emotional kind. But he succeeded only partially. Lectures on temperance and other philanthropic subjects are allowed to be delivered in it, but it is not exactly such a centre of broad, catholic and practical religion as the founder of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha and the Barahanagar Institute sought to make it.

The Sadharan Dharma Sabha movement died out in the course of a few years for want of active workers to keep it up in the absence of Mr. Banurji, but not until it had saturated the atmosphere around it with the catholic spirit from which it had arisen and which characterised it throughout the period of its existence. That spirit is the spirit that inspires the highest thought and feeling of the age. There is a deep and growing desire among the leading spirits of the race everywhere for co-operation—co-operation in all higher matters and co-operation among men whom it would be thought impossible and even preposterous, a few decades back, to bring together. Thus is the world moving steadily on to that glorious union—that unity in diversity—which Religion has always dreamed of as the character of the golden age, and which Philosophy aspires after as the goal of all healthy evolution.

FEMALE EDUCATION.

I shall follow up the foregoing articles by a sketch of the history of female education in Bengal, with special reference to the work, in that line, of Babu Sasipada Banurji. As we have already seen, Babu Sasipada very clearly saw the truth at the very first start of his reforming career, that the education of women is the very foundation of social reform. To leave women uneducated is to leave one half of the frame of society quite unsound and to weaken the other half too by allowing the unsound part to hang upon it as a dead weight and continually hamper all its movements. In the foregoing sketches we have seen Mr. Banurji beginning his reform work by undertaking the education of his child-wife and thereby gaining a constant helpmeet and co-worker in the labours that were to follow. We have also seen how his reform work, thus begun at the right place, gradually extended so as to take in the whole country into the field of his mental vision, and how this particular question of female education itself developed at his hands into a wide-reaching movement for the training of widows and other women. I shall, in this sketch, trace the gradual progress, stage by stage, of this movement, stating in some detail, both the difficulties that confronted our reformer,—difficulties surmounted by a singular pertinacity of purpose,—and also the helps and facilities that were afforded him in this noble work. It will be seen that Babu Sasipada's work in the field of female education had, from its very beginning, a distinctive characteristic of its own, and that this peculiar character of his work was never lost sight of by him throughout his career. His predecessors in the field, like many of those who followed him, confined their attention to the education of mere *girls*, maidens as a rule, as if the education of married and grown-up women were unnecessary or a task that could not be taken up with any hope of success. Babu Sasipada Banurji perceived from the very beginning that in a country where the custom of child-marriage prevailed, a custom that would take centuries to be eradicated, the education of little unmarried girls was only a half-measure, and that society could not be touched in its vital parts if the wives and widows were left unattended to. Mr. Banurji's labours in the cause of female education were always guided, we shall see, by this idea, and this idea—the necessity of educating married and grown-up women,—was taken up, we shall further see, by the country and became the source of many a healthy movement for the amelioration of the condition of our women.

When Mr. Banurji began his work, he found he was already preceded in the field by a noble band of pioneers. A brief mention of the work of these pioneers would be both interesting and necessary for understanding his work. A few words on female education in the country when the present movement—the movement under British rule—began, seems also necessary. We need not go back to ancient

times. That there were learned women in the Vedic, heroic and Puranic ages, is petty well known to all. The names of Visvabara, Atreyi, Gargi, Maitreyi, Ubhaybharati and others are household names to the educated. Ladies of comparatively recent times, *e. g.* Khana and Hati Vidyalankar, are also well-known. But the very paucity of such names shows that women in general received no education in those days in the country. If female education had been wide-spread, there would have been a much larger number of learned ladies to speak of than what has come down to us. Leaving earlier periods untouched, therefore, we come to the time when the present movement for the education of women began. That period had a history. It was partly determined, so far as Bengal was concerned, by the Vaishnava Revival Movement of Chaitanya in the fifteenth century We must, therefore, go back to it for a while. What the reformation of Luther, leading to the translation of the Christian scriptures into the vernaculars of Christendom, did for the furtherance of female education in Europe, that the Reformation of Chaitanya did for it in Bengal. In the olden times Sanskrit was the language of the learned; women, even of princely houses, exchanged their thoughts in the vernacular, Prakrita. In Sanskrit dramas, for instance in the *Sakuntala* and the *Uttara Rama Charita*, women and servants are found to hold converse in Prakrita, while the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas used Sanskrit as the medium of their thoughts. The more cultured women, that is, those who had any occasion to read the scriptures, Atreyi for instance, in the *Uttara Rama Charita*, also spoke in Sanskrit.

As the scriptures and the entire sacred lore were in Sanskrit, women having no opportunities to learn that difficult language, necessarily did not much care to secure any education in the vernacular of their people. But the Vaishnava reformation of Chaitanya gave birth to an extensive religious literature in Bengali. The *Chaitanya Bhagavat*, the *Chaitanya Mangal*, and other books written purely in the vernacular of the province, and the *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, the narrative portion of which is in Bengali, came soon to be regarded by the Bengal School of Vaishnavism as the sacred books of their sect. This at once produced among the followers of Chaitanya in Bengal a desire and an opening for female education. Within a few days of Chaitanya's demise or disappearance, female teachers were seen preaching the new gospel to large crowds of women. Jahnavi Devi, wife of Nityananda; the right hand man and the most trusted disciple of Chaitanya, Sita Devi, wife of Advaita, Hemlata, daughter of Acharya Prabhu, and Madhavilata were among the most renowned preachers of the new religion in Bengal. And ever since their times, female education has obtained very largely among the followers of Chaitanya in these provinces. When Mr. John Adam was deputed by the Government to inquire into the state of vernacular education in Bengal in 1833-34, he found the practice of educating their daughters prevalent among the Vaishnavas of Rajshahi. He wrote in his report :—"Other exceptions to the general ignorance (of females)

are found amongst the mendicant Vaishnavas or followers of Chaitanya, amounting in Nattore probably to 14 or 15 thousand individuals, who are generally able to write and read, and who are also alleged to instruct their daughters in these accomplishments. They are the only religious body of whom as a sect the practice is characteristic." Among certain denominations of their sect, as for instance, that known as the Kishori Bhajas in Sylhet, the reading of a portion of *Chaitanya Charitamrita* or *Chaitanya Bhagavat* is regarded as an essentially religious exercise, for which reason the members of this denomination, both male and female, learn to read and write. In Santipur and Nadiya, the chief centres and seats of Vaishnava influence in Bengal, women in the early part of the last century were known not only to possess a rudimentary knowledge of the vernacular, but some even acted as public preachers. There was early in the thirties and forties, an old woman at Santipur, Kshepi by name, who had a pretty large library of Vaishnava scriptures in her house, which she used to read and expound of an evening to large crowds of women and boys. Kshepi is said to have come from Sylhet and settled towards the close of her life at Santipur, on the banks of the sacred Ganges. A daughter of Rasharaj, the well-known buffon of the Court of Raja Krishnachandra Ray of Krishnanagar, lived at Santipur in those days, and she too was well conversant with the literature of her people. Some twenty years ago, a very old woman used to be seen expounding even the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* to crowds of women at Brindaban, and she was supposed to have gone from one of the Eastern districts of Bengal. Outside the pale of Vaishnavism also, some women distinguished themselves in Sanskrit learning. We have already mentioned Hati Vidyalankar. She was a Bengali lady who learnt Sanskrit in her childhood and youth and gradually rose to such eminence that she retired to Benares, where she gave lessons in many of the most abstruse branches of learning, and used to receive invitations from the gentry and nobility of the country as a learned Pandit, and hold disputations in ceremonial assemblies. In the village of Kotalipara, in Faridpur, in East Bengal, the wife of a learned Brahmana studied Grammar and Logic towards the beginning of the last century.

But while religious considerations led the Vaishnavas to educate their daughters in the eighteenth and the beginning of the last century in Bengal, secular considerations led others to the same course. Mr Adam found that the Zamindars of Rajshahi imparted some sort of book education to their daughters. In his second report on Vernacular Education in Bengal, he says :—

"They (the Zamindars) in general instruct their daughters in the elements of knowledge, although it is difficult to obtain from them an admission of this fact. They hope to marry their daughters into families of wealth and property, and they perceive that without a knowledge of writing and accounts their daughters will, in the event of widowhood, be incompetent to manage their deceased husbands' estates, and will unavaidably become a prey to the interested and

unprincipled. * * Instances sometimes occur of young Hindu females who have received no instructions under their parents' roof, taking lessons, at the instigation of their parents and brothers, after they have become widows, with a view to the adequate protection of the families of which they have become members. The number of big Zamindars in the whole district is about 50 or 60, of whom more than half are women, many of them widows. Of these two, namely Ranis Suryamani and Kamalmani Devi, are alleged to possess a competent knowledge of Bengali and accounts, while some of the rest are more imperfectly instructed and the others wholly ignorant."

And we have it on the authority of Raja Sir Radhakanta Dev himself that the female members of his own family were almost all of them tolerably educated. (Sir Raja Radhakanta Dev's essay on "Female Education." Calcutta, 1821.)

There was yet another class of women, and more especially old women, who learnt to read and write their own vernacular in those early days. They were the bereaved widows or matrons having a religious turn of mind. We know of a lady, belonging to a respectable Kayastha family, who learnt her alphabet at quite an advanced period of life, when she had suffered a most grievous bereavement on the death of her only son. This almost unbearable grief drew her to her God, and she took to reading with a view to beguile her sad days with the recitation of sacred lore.

When, therefore, Miss Cook, who afterwards became Mrs. Wilson, the first English lady who sought to impart some sort of systematic education to the women of Calcutta, arrived in the country in the year 1821, it would be wrong to suppose that there were absolutely no women in Bengal who knew how to read and write their own vernacular thoroughly. But their number was very small; and these few had never received any encouragement from their people in their endeavours to secure the elements of a most rudimentary kind of education. The Vaishnavas, among whom female education seemed to have prevailed in some appreciable degree, were a despised class. The Vaishnavas of Bengal may be divided broadly into two sections, namely those who, though worshippers of Krishna, and admirers of the law of *Bhakti* propounded in the *Bhagavata* and *the Gita* and preached by Chaitanya, were however, followers of the *Smritis* in their domestic and social life. These belonged, generally, to the higher classes of society. They were not, strictly speaking, adherents of the prophet of Nadiya. Chaitanya had interdicted the worship of all gods and goddesses except Vishnu and his consort; he had relaxed rules of caste, he had set aside many popular and prevailing Brahmannical laws, and his immediate successors had organised their community into a sort of reformed Hindus. Persons belonging to all castes were admitted into the communion. Though the early Vaishnava leaders of Bengal, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sought to introduce all these reforms into the country, and though they drew large numbers of people belonging to the lower classes of society into their fold, the higher castes were left almost wholly outside the

range of their influence, and when some solitary individuals or families belonging to these castes did receive their creed and accept their sacrament, they nevertheless adhered to the social code of the general body of Hindus. As a result of this, the real Vaishnavas, that is, those who worshipped Chaitanya as an incarnation of Krishna, and had no concern with o her gods and goddesses, and who adopted the rules of life promulgated by the early Vaishnava teachers who succeeded Chaitanya, came soon to the regarded as practically beyond the pale of respectable Hindu society. They became a class of Bohemians in the country, whose manners and customs necessarily had little or no influence upon the general community. It is no wonder therefore, that side by side with the large percentage of Vaisnnava women who cou d read and write, in those days, there should reign the darkest and the grossest superstitions regarding the education of females among the general body of the Hindus of Bengal.

When, therefore, Miss Cooke came to Calcutta, and the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society was formed about the year 1821, strong objections were raised against their attempts to impart any kind of systematic education to Bengali girls. The attention of the Calcutta School Society, established for helping the education of Bengali boys, had first been incidentally called to the subject of female education in the year 1820, by a number of girls educated by some Christian missionaries, appearing at a public examination held by that society. But the Society, while stating that "although attempts to promote female education are highly approved," declared that as members of an Association composed jointly of Natives and Europeans, the former cannot be expected to act all at once upon the suggestion of the latter, militating against opposite sentiments of very long standing, and it was therefore determined that the time had not yet arrived for the direct endeavour by the Society to establish native girls' schools under female teachers. The British and Foreign School Society, however, in consultation with the Calcutta School Society's Agent in London, and with Mr. Ward, the well-known missionary of Serampore, raised subscriptions for the outfit of a mistress to be sent out to India to instruct Indian females in the Lancastrian method of mutual instruction, that they might afterwards be the pioneers of female education in the country and diffuse the system as opportunities occurred. Miss Cooke accordingly arrived in Calcutta in November 1821, but as the Calcutta School Society could not support her, her services were engaged by the Church Missionary Society. (Report on Vernacular Education in Bengal by John Adam. 1834.) It was an exceedingly uphill work in which Miss Cooke found herself engaged in 1821. There was absolutely no girl whom she might teach. And she had not only to attend the school, but also go about literally from door to door, begging for girls. The fathers would not listen to what appeared to them a monstrous proposal; and the women were dead against it. They feared that by teaching their girls to read and write, they would bring on them the dreadful curse of widowhood. It is difficult to say whence this superstitious dread took hold of the popular mind in Bengal, on

this subject of female education. There is absolutely nothing in the law-books and scriptures of the Hindus that might engender or foster such a notion. But popular prejudice and prevailing custom wield infinitely greater influence over the life and thought of the degenerate Hindus than either the voice of reason or the injunctions of the scriptures; consequently, although the scriptures were not known to interdict the education of women, the custom of the country, which had, for centuries, kept the gentler sex in almost absolute ignorance, had assumed the character and force of common case-law on the subject, and ruled it more powerfully than any sastric authority. One reason why, in these latter days, female education came to be regarded as a disgrace, a scandal, was perhaps a circumstance which the very want of education among respectable women had itself called into existence. It was the prevalence of education among that luckless class of women who had fallen off from the honour and sanctity of the married state. Like the *hetairæ* of ancient Greece, the only class of women among whom there was any degree of what might be called by courtesy literary culture, were the courtezans. Not only the finer arts of music, both vocal and instrumental, but also the cultivation of poetry and drama, were almost restricted to them. The male poets themselves,—some of them at least,—drew their inspiration from the company of these females. It was perhaps this unfortunate association of Bohemian life with literary culture and those finer accomplishments which so fittingly adorn female life in other parts of the world, that led to this baneful superstition about female education. No respectable Hindu would listen to any proposal for the education of his girls, and when, as in certain families, from any special considerations, the girls were taught to read and write, the fact was kept as a family secret by their parents and friends. And when Sir Raja Radhakanta Dev, in his brochure on female education, made public the fact that the female members of his family knew reading and writing, it created great sensation and some scandal in the orthodox Hindu society of Calcutta.

But the general feeling of opposition against female education was not the only difficulty that Miss Cooke had to contend against while trying to secure girls for her school. Even those who might be persuaded to teach their girls, could not be prevailed upon to put them in charge of a European Christian lady. For many years, therefore, though Miss Cooke worked hard, collecting girls in the morning, teaching them during the day, and paying conciliatory visits to their guardians in the evening, enticing the girls to school by making presents of dolls, clothes, trinkets, and sometimes even by bribing their mothers in a variety of forms, carrying the girls on her back and making herself agreeable to them in a thousand other ways,—for long years she could draw hardly any girls of the higher castes into her school. It was the poor and the needy, men without wealth or rank or social position, whose girls formed the large majority of her pupils. In fact all attempts towards securing girls of the higher castes and classes proved so fruitless, that Miss Cooke, who

had then become Mrs. Wilson, seems to have given up the task as almost hopeless, and confined her work to Christian girls and orphans, and taking charge of an Orphanage situated in Circular Road.

But although the higher classes of society generally held aloof from the movement of Miss Cooke, her labours were not, on that account, altogether unsuccessful. Within three years of her arrival in Calcutta, *i.e*, in 1824, she had 24 schools under her superintendence, attended on an average by 400 pupils. In that year the Corresponding Committee of the C. M. Society, under whom Miss Cooke had so long been working, relinquished the entire management and direction of the female schools to a society just formed under the designation of the "Ladies' Society for Native Female Education." The first systematic and organised attempts for the promotion of native female education in Bengal were due to this generous body. English ladies and gentlemen in the most remote corners of the province formed themselves into branch organisations of this body, and established schools for the education of girls. In Calcutta and its neighbourhood alone, this society at one time managed so many as 30 girls' schools attended by over 600 pupils ; "but instead of still further multiplying the number of schools, it was deemed advisable to concentrate them, and a Central School was accordingly built and occupied in 1838." Since then the Ladies' Society, as long as it lasted, chiefly confined itself "to that sphere of labour". Under the generous influence of this society, many schools were opened in the mufussil. There were schools for girls at Burdwan, Bankura, Krishnanagar, Nadiya and Kalna, all managed by European ladies and gentlemen connected with the Calcutta Ladies' Society. There was also a number of schools under the management of Christian missionaries. But whether in Calcutta or in the mufussil, the main portion of the girls was drawn invariably from the lower ranks of society. For instance, in the 4 female schools founded by Mr. Adam in the Burdwan District in 1838, there were one hundred and seventy-five girls in all. Of these, 1 was a Muhammadan, 36 were either daughters of Christian parents or orphans rescued from starvation and supported by the missionaries, and 138 Hindus. Of these 138 girls—

58	were	Bagdis
18	,,	Muchis
17	,,	Bauris
17	,,	Doms
12	,,	Haris
6	,,	Vaishnavas
6	,,	Tantis
2	,,	Chandals
1	was a	Kurmi, and
1	,, a	Baite.

And what was true of the Burdwan schools was equally true of the other girls' schools of those days. In fact, the very methods adopted by the promoters of female education in those days were altogether unsuited to the country. The instruction given in the schools was

mostly religious and Christian. Mr. John Adam, though himself a zealous Christian, and connected with one of the Christian missions in Bengal, condemned those methods in unequivocal terms. "The native prejudice against female instruction" he said in his third report, "though not insuperable, is strong ; and the prejudice against the object should not be increased by the nature of the means employed to effect it. Now, it appears nearly certain that, independent of the prejudice against the object, native parents of respectable rank must be unwilling to allow their daughters, contrary to the custom of native society, to leave their own homes and their own neighbourhoods and proceed to a distance greater or less in different cases to receive instruction, and this unwillingness cannot be lessened if it should appear that they will be placed in frequent and unavoidable communication with teachers and sarcars of the male sex and of youthful age, and, in some instances, with the corrupt and vicious of their own sex. To reassure the minds of native parents, native matrons are employed as messengers and protectors to conduct the girls to and from school, but it is evident that this does not inspire confidence, for, with scarcely any exception, it is only children of the very poorest and lowest castes that attend the girls' schools, and their attendance is avowedly purchased. The backwardness of native parents of good caste may be further explained by the fact that the girls' schools are under the sole direction of the missionaries, and the case of the Birbhum School shows that to combine the special object of conversion with the general object of female instruction, must be fatal to the latter without accomplishing the former."

So, notwithstanding the philanthropic efforts of the Female Juvenile Education Society and other public bodies of this kind, largely supplemented by those of the Christian missionaries settled in different parts of the country, the progress of female education according to modern methods was exceedingly slow in Bengal, especially among the higher castes of Hindus, during the quarter of a century that followed the arrival of Miss Cooke in Calcutta in the year 1821. The Government also, with characteristic caution, held aloof from the movement of these public bodies and missionary gentlemen. But gradually, with the progress of general education among the youths of the country belonging mostly to the higher classes of society, a natural desire, however feeble at first, began to stir in the minds of the people themselves for the promotion of that education among their wives and daughters. But it took a long time indeed for this desire to assume any tangible shape. And it was not till the year 1849 that the first school for Hindu girls of the higher castes was founded in Calcutta.

Two men,—one an Englishman holding a high position in the service of the East India Company's Government in Bengal,—Mr. Drinkwater Bethune, Law Member of the Governor General's Council and President of the Council of Education,—and another, a high caste Brahman, employed in a subordinate though responsible position in

the Education Department,—Pandit Isvarachandra Vidyasagar,—were the main promoters of this school, which was started under the fitting name of the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya or Hindu Girls' School. It was managed by a strong and influential Committee of Hindu gentlemen. But in spite of the influential auspices under which it was opened, even the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya had to experience considerable difficulty in securing the rst batch of its girl pupils. The Hon'ble Justice Shambhunath Pandit, the first Indian Judge of the High Court of Judicature at Fort William, Babu Ramgopal Ghosh, a leading merchant and the first Indian orator, and Pandit Madanmohan Tarkalankar, a well-known Bengali author of the times, were among the chief supporters of this school; and they had all of them to suffer social persecution for espousing so publicly the cause of female education among their countrymen; and the fact that Pandit Madanmohan had to suffer social excommunication for sending his daughter to school, shows the intensity and strength of the popular prejudice against this reform that still worked among the higher classes of Hindus even in the enlightened metropolis of British India.

The establishment of the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya in Calcutta was, in fact, the beginning of a general movement for the promotion of female education generally among Hindus in Bengal. One of its principal founders and supporters, Pandit Isvarachandra Vidyasagar, having been appointed an Inspector of schools, with jurisdiction over certain districts in West Bengal, about the year 1854, established and practically maintained at his own expense a pretty large number of girls' schoo's in these districts. These schools were started on the strength of certain verbal instructions of the Hon'ble Sir Frederick Halliday, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. But on a difference arising between Pandit Isvarachandra and the Director of Public Instruction, the charge of maintaining these schools, about a hundred in all, ultimately fell on Vidyasagar, the Government having refused to sanction the expenditure incurred on account of these schools. Vidyasagar, however, with his characteristic tenacity of purpose and self-sacrifice, supported these institutions for some years even after his connection with the education department of the Government of Bengal had ceased.

But in spite of all these efforts the progress made was exceedingly insignificant. The Hindu Balika Vidyalaya, named subsequently the Bethune Female School, after the Hon'ble Drinkwater Bethune, who died within a couple of years of its establishment, continued to exist, no doubt, but did not secure that amount of public confidence which alone could ensure its success and enlarge its sphere of usefulness. Even members of the committee of this school hesitated for long years to send in their own daughters and wards for instruction there. From a debate on the subject of female education in the Bethune Society of Calcutta, held about the beginning of 1860, it appears that the cause of female education in Calcutta and its neighbourhood still needed all the help and sacrifice that its votaries could give and make on its behalf. In the course of this debate, Babu Ramaprasad Ray, the

son of the well-known Brahman reformer and philanthrophist, Raja Rammohan Ray, observed that "things were still very far behind, but that compared with thirty or even ten years ago, very great progress of a general kind had been made in the way of softening hostile prejudices and ensuring a certain amount of private education for the females of the higher classes." "And", referring to the action of the Government in the matter of the girls' schools founded by Pandit Isvarachandra Vidyasagar in the Hughli, Burdwan, Medinipur and Nadiya districts, he said, "were it not for the arrest laid on the process by the virtual withdrawal of Government support two or three years ago, female schools might by this time be established in almost every district of Bengal"

Babu Ramaprasad, however, seems to have taken a much too optimistic view of the situation, for even this modest estimate of progress made by him was not assented to as accurate by his friends in the Bethune Society, and Babu Girishchandra Ghosh, a well-known journalist of those days, bore lively testimony to the "difficulties that had still to be encountered in the education of the young females from the ignorant prejudices of mothers, grandmothers, aunts and other aged relatives. He also asked whether any of the native managers of the Bethune Female School sent their own daughters to it? If not, as he had reason to suppose was the case, he asked again, how could they expect the Institution really to prosper and effect all the good it was fitted and designed to produce if its managers, through want of moral courage, or any other cause, declined to avail themselves of the benefits which it afforded. In order to encourage the natives generally and inspire confidence in the Institution, surely the first duty of the native managers was to set the example which they expected to be copied, by sending their own daughters and other young female relatives to be instructed and tra ned there. He concluded by expressing a hope that the rajas and other native managers of the Bethune Female School would be able to stimulate the neighbours to avail themselves of the advantages which the school clearly offered by pointing to their own example."

In summing up the debate, Dr. Duff, the well-known Free Church missionary acting as President, "urged the native gentlemen not to allow the present year, (1860) to terminate without seeing the Bethune School replenished to overflowing. It now mustered only 70 on its rolls, whereas according to the testimony of one of the native speakers that night, Calcutta alone might at once furnish 7,000."

This, then, was the state of female education in Calcutta at the time when young Sasipada took unto him a wife, and if its prospects were so poor in Calcutta, the centre of all enlightened activities, where the influence of modern ideas was the strongest, outside Calcutta almost cimmerian darkness reigned everywhere. And it was in the midst of this almost total darkness that our youthful reformer was led by God to light his farthing rush-light in the old home of the Banurjis at Barahanagar.

Babu Sasipada, as we have seen, was married in the year 1860.

But according to the custom of the country, a custom now unhappily falling into disuse, his wife did not come to live in his family until a year after the marriage. Even this was, in those days, considered a rather early period for a newly married girl to come and live with her husband's family. But the elder Mrs. Banurji had suffered serious bereavement in the death of her second son. And the lady needed some tender care and loving service. Consequently the year following that auspicious event, young Mrs Banurji came to live with her mother-in-law under the old and honoured family roof-tree of the Banurjis.

The education that young Sasipada had received had made him in many respects altogether different from his fathers. His ideas of life and things had become different. His ideals of duty were no longer those of his own people. His estimates of family life had also changed very widely from those of his ancestors. His religious sentiment had taken an altogether new channel. He had little sympathy with the popular institutions of his country. He had no faith in the popular ceremonial religion of his people. In his family, especially among the old men and the general women folk of his paternal house, he lived in a painful intellectual and spiritual isolation. The only person whom he could turn to for sympathy and appreciation was his wife. But centuries of ignorance and superstition had absolutely unfitted the Hindu woman for becoming a real helpmeet and intellectual companion to her husband. What was there to be done? How to convert the uneducated girl whom he had brought home as his wife, into a real helpmeet and companion, able and willing to take her proper place as a co-worker with her husband, sharing in his thoughts and sympathising with his aspirations?

These were the thoughts that begun to surge up in young Sasipada's mind as soon as his wife came to live with his mother in the year 1861. "This was an anxious thought to him.—either he must help her up or himself go down to her her." * The education that Sasipada had received, while it had fatally undermined his faith in the popular creed and ceremonials of his people, had, however, unlike many a young Bengali of his days, not landed him either in godless despair or sceptic epicureanism. The forms had no hold on him, but the substance behind was still an absolute reality the myths rightly vanished, leaving, however, the consciousness of a Supreme Dispenser clearer than ever. In this hour of need, young Sasipada turned to him for light, strength and guidance. "He passed several days and nights in earnest, solitary prayers for help to get over this difficulty, and his prayers were not in vain."* For he was thus inspired with a strong determination to communicate the light of education that he had himself received, to his youthful wife at all costs and hazards.

The difficulties in his way were, however, immensely greater than what men living in this enlightened generation can conceive. The first great difficulty was to secure the consent of his wife to be taught

* Mr. Wilson's pamphlet.

any book-learning. Brought up in the heart of an exceedingly orthodox family, she had an almost inconceivable dread of reading and writing. Popular superstition and folklore had instilled into her tender mind the notion that for a woman to learn to read and write was a sure means of calling upon her the destitution of widowhood or of courting the still more serious chances of a falling off from the honour and dignity of the married state. The only two classes of women who could read and write in those days in Bengal, outside the fold of the mendicant Vaishnavas, of whom people knew little or nothing, were, as we have seen, either the widowed proprietors of large zamindaries, or those who might be called the hetairœ of Bengal society. And taking an accident for an efficient cause, widowhood and prostitution had come to be recognised by unreflective public as an inevitable consequence of the culture of the understanding through the study of books. The feeling had taken so deep a root in the minds of the people, and more particularly of the women, that it was considered almost a libel to mention the matter to any respectable Hindu lady. It was, therefore, nothing strange that when Sasipada broke his thoughts to his wife, she was simply astounded, and when pressed for compliance, stoutly refused to have anything to do with it. An ordinary youngman would have given up the idea as impossible of execution under these initial difficulties. But Sasipada had always an extraordinary fund of pertinacity in him. In the midst of all the vicissitudes of life that he had to pass through, he never knew what it was to set his heart upon a thing and not to get it Failures, obstacles and oppositions always work together for the ultimate realisation of his plans and purposes. Though the initial difficulties in his way were thus very great, he did not for a moment relax his exertions to bring over his wife to his way of thinking in this matter. The aspiration to teach their wives moved almost all educated Bengali youths in those days. But most of them used to be driven by the very initial difficulties of their position in regard to a proper realisation of these noble aspirations, to the company of the Bengali hetairœ. But Sasipada was made of a different stuff; and by dint of tact and perseverance, and a dogged pertinacity of purpose, he was among his people about the first man who overcame all difficulties and himself worked up the education of his wife, unaided by any extraneous agency.

It took, however, a long time before the young Mrs. Banurji could be induced to take a book into her hands. In joint Hindu families, a young man has little or no opportunities of meeting his wife except at night, when all the family go to bed. In those days it was considered highly improper for the younger members of the family to talk to, much less to sit by, their wives in broad daylight. In fact, the household arrangements were such that there was neither place nor time for the young married people to meet each other before going to bed. The system of zenana seclusion rendered a common drawing room for the whole family to meet and converse with one another unnecessary. The men had their parlour, where women had no access, and the women their own parlour, which was generally either

the veranda of the house or some room adjoining the kitchen, from which all grown up male members of the family were excluded. Time and the progress of modern ideas have worked some change in this respect in recent years, especially in centres of enlightenment like Calcutta and other big cities, where married persons meet each other whenever they like, in their own bedrooms, which also does duty for the wife's *boudoir* ; but in the days when Sasipada was married even this slight improvement or innovation had not been made in the domestic life of the Hindus of Bengal. It was therefore impossible for him to devote as much time as he wanted to prepare his wife's mind on this matter "Sometimes he used to be anxious to see her before going out for business, which was at 8 or 8-30 A.M., but she could not be seen. This went keenly to his heart."*

But notwithstanding the resistance which Sasipada's young wife at first offered to his proposal to teach her to read and write, she had at last to give way to her husband's wishes on the subject. The Hindu woman may be very strong in her superstitions, but her feeling of respect for her husband, and her sense of duty to him are stronger still. Nay, this respect and this absolute, unquestioning obedience to the wishes of the husband may almost be regarded as even a phase of superstition. She has never been taught to have any commodity like conscience apart from the wishes and injunctions of her lord. From the earliest times, Hindu ideas have put the man almost in the place of God in regard to his wife. The boy has to receive the sacrament of *upanayana* for his purification and right of admission to the service of the gods. But for a girl, says Manu, the only sacrament is marriage. Her husband stands in the position of the *guru*—the *guru* of all *gurus*. She may argue with him, she may try to coax him out of any plan or purpose, but when argument and coaxing fail, her duty is to render absolute obedience to his wishes. And her unrivalled love also strengthens the virtue of obedience in the Hindu woman Although it was not, as an English writer speaking of Sasipada's first attempts to teach his wife says, "a small trial on his part to persuade her to take to letters,"—his ultimate success was also assured if only he worked with a little tact and perseverance. "She was against female education", to quote the same writer, "and would not give herself up to it. She used all the prevalent orthodox arguments against female education to desist her husband from the attempt, but he knew what he was to do. She was, however, obedient, and his loving persuasion had at last its effect on her. She began to learn during the end of the year 1861."

The initial difficulty of bringing over his wife to his own mode of thinking in this matter was however the least of all. His most perplexing difficulties and sorest trials commenced only when the wife agreed to learn. How was she to be taught? At first he began to teach her only in a surreptitious way, during the watches of the night. But his wife was then very young, almost a girl, and she had yet to

* Mr. Wilson's pamphlet.

take her proper share in the work of the household, which was no small strain on her tender frame. Consequently she could not keep up as long as either her husband would wish or her lessons required. At day time she dared not spend her leisure hours in preparing her lessons for fear of detection by the other members of the family. Consequently her progress at first was exceedingly slow. But as time went on, and she got more familiar with her lessons and imbibed a taste for learning, Sasipada became more and more bold and began to teach his wife even during the day. These were things with which Hindu Society had not as yet become familiar, and the meeting of this youthful pair for purposes of study in the broad light of the day in view of the whole family caused considerable scandal amongst not only the old men and women of the Banurji houshold, but even in the general community of Barahanagar. The conduct of the young wife became the subject of general conversation and comment in the neighbourhood. Her forwardness, which is regarded by the ideal of Hindu womanhood as almost a falling-off from feminine grace and virtue, became an object of horror and abomination to the women of the little town, while the men themselves were unsparing in their condemnation of the scandal that Sasipada's 'shameless' conduct had created in the community. The position of the little wife at the time can be better imagined than described. If the circumstances were trying to Sasipada, to his wife they were naturally a source of the accutest suffering. But while he bore up all this contumely and calumny by relying upon his God, she bore her keener troubles and larger trials for the sake of her deep love and strong sense of duty towards her husband, such as are peculiar to Hindu women.

Such faith and such persistence of purpose never fail of their end, and Sasipada's sacred labours began gradually to be crowned with success. The progress made by his wife in her studies in a few months "attacted the notice of his widowed sister-in-law (brother's wife), whom they persuaded to begin with the alphabet. These two formed his first class, and though at the time he had no idea of opening a school, this may very well be called the beginning of female education work in Barahanagar. Gradually his niece came to the age when she could receive some education, and though it was not at all considered a necessity at the time, he felt it his duty to educate her, and Mrs. Banurji took charge of her."*

In course of time, when he found that his wife and sister-in-law had made sufficient progress to be able to take charge of the education of little girls themselves, he organised a class for them in his house in which almost all the girls of the Banurji family, "consisting of a large number of inmates, seven generations both by the male and female lines, living in the same house," joined. But the progress made by the two Mrs. Banurjis had also by this time created a desire for learning even among some of the adult ladies of the family, for

Mr. Wilson's pamphlet.

whom Sasipada opened another class, undertaking the tuition himself.

It will thus be seen that Babu Sasipada Banurji did not go out of his way, like many a so called reformer of latter days, to seek and find out his work. His life-work, on the contrary, itself sought him out. It arose at first out of a private and personal necessity, and then, by slow degrees, growing both in volume and velocity, it became first the centre of reforming activities in a large family, then in course of time it included within its opertions a small town, and finally, in the fulness of the purposes of a benign Providence, whose hand has been clear in it all along, it was embodied in a recognised and useful institution of a large and enlightened province.

There was another feature in the work thus commenced by Babu Sasipada Banurji which was peculiarly his own, and which as I have already remarked at the outset, marks him out as an original worker and pioneer in the field of female education and female advancement in Bengal. Hitherto all the education given had been mostly confined to girls of a very tender age. The young women of the country had been left almost absolutely beyond the sphere of the operations either of the Female Juvenile Education Society, or the Bethune Female School. Girls were then, as now. married at a very early age, and with their marriage their education practically came to an end, for the prevailing system of zenana seclusion made it impossible for a married girl, however young she might be, to go to any public school, while no means had as yet been devised by their parents or husbands to foster and develop the good seed that they might have received at school. Besides, the very large class of young married girls and widows of tender years, who had never had the advantages of a training, however meagre, in any girls' school, had absolutely no means open to them for improving their minds by learning to read and write. And yet if anybody stood in need of education, it was these young wives and widows,—wives to be fit companions to their educated husbands, and widows to find a pure, ennobling and healthy occupation to lighten the miseries of their pitiful situation. It was left to Babu Sasipada Banurji to lead the way in Bengal to both these reforms. He was the first to recognise that the only means by which, under the circumstances of the country in those days, young Hindu wives could be instructed to read and write, was for the husbands or other members of the family to undertake their tuition themselves; as he was also the first to see how the miseries of the Hindu widow's lot could be lessened and lightened by putting her in communication with the higher thoughts of her people, as recorded in the literature of her country, through imparting some sort of sound book-education to her. Since then many others have worked on both these lines, with more or less success, but his will ever be the credit of having been the first to recognise the needs of the situation and to brave the difficulties that confront all pioneer workers in any reform-movement.

There was little or no interest among the general Hindu popula-

tion of the country in those days in the progress of female education. Even in Calcutta, the metropolis of the British Government in India, and the principal seat and centre of all enlightened activities, the interest in female education was so exceedingly feeble, that the levy of a small fee of one rupee per head at once reduced the students of the Bethune Female School, in 1866 67, five years after Sasipada Banurji had commenced his work in the neighbouring town of Barahanagar, from 97 to 55; while the Deputy Inspector of Dacca, the second town in Bengal, reported in the same year to the Inspector of schools of his division "that if a fee of one anna were exacted, the number of girls" in the Dacca School "would certainly be reduced to below twenty, from seventy-six, at which it then stood, and probably the school would disappear." Another Divisional Inspector reported in the same year: "I have not encouraged the establishment of girls' schools, because I know that competent teachers for this division are not to be had, and without such teachers, schools would be a delusion."

But Sasipada Banurji had commenced to work in a different, though more homely line, and the very homely and humble nature of his work led to its success. The work of education commenced by Mr. Banurji, was, as we have already seen, at first confined to his own family. But gradually the enthusiasm for learning evoked in the women and girl inmates of his ancestral dwelling-house spread to their neighbours, and "some girls came and joined the class from the neighbouring houses." This was the early and humble beginning of a public girls' school at Barahanagar.

The very natural way in which the work was commenced by Sasipada enlisted the sympathy of his more enlightened and educated friends and relations. Of these his cousin, Babu Saradaprasad Banurji, sometime Chairman of the Barahanagar Municipality, who was at that time employed as the Head Master of the Narail High English School, in the District of Jessore, was the most prominent. In the midst of all his early trials, Sasipada received unabating sympathy and encouragement from him. In a letter dated Narail, the 5th September, 1864, he wrote to Sasipada, referring to the good work that he was doing at Barahanagar, in the following terms:—"The establishment of a Zenana Girls' School has given me more satisfaction than I can express. May it thrive well under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Sasi!"

Next year Sasipada's wife opened a correspondence with his cousin at Narail, and with his younger brother, who had gone for a change to Muzaffarpur. Both these steps were a fair indication of the larger practical results soon to follow from the education that Sasipada was imparting to his wife and other females of the Banurji family at Barahanagar. The custom of the country prohibits an elder brother or cousin to talk to or hold any communication with his younger brother's or cousin's wife, as the latter is similarly prohibited from having any communication with her husband's elder brothers or cousins. It is a very old custom which perhaps had

its origin in the now absolutely obsolete practice which obtained among the Hindus of the middle ages by which an elder brother could raise legitimate issues on his younger brother's wife if he should die without any issue himself. But though the custom, commonly called the law of *niyoga*, was interdicted centuries ago, and has been declared by the celebrated Hindu lawgiver Manu to be a brutal custom that deserves to be severely condemned, and which is unfit to be observed by a Brahmana, the restriction originally imposed as a healthy antidote against the evils likely to follow from the practice of *niyoga*, had, however, no longer any logic or necessity in it. But nowhere is the logic of a custom less inquired into than in this country; and rational or irrational, this custom has yet a very strong hold, especially upon the women of the country. Mrs. Banurji, therefore, could not open any correspondence with her husband's elder cousin Sarada Prasad without violating this time-honoured custom. But the education that she was receiving had already opened her eyes to the foolish and unnatural character of some of these restrictions. "She had," as Mr. James Wilson, late editor of the *Indian Daily News* puts it in his interesting brochure on "Female Education in Bengal," from which we have already made several quotations, "made sufficient advance over the prevailing superstitious notions of the country" by the year 1865, that is, within four years of her beginning to read and write, to have the courage to open a correspondence with Babu Saradaprasad, who, on receipt of her first communication, wrote to her husband: "I am very glad to see Mrs. Sasi's letter, which I received not so much as a token of friendship from a dear relative, but as a literary performance of one of the female sex. Great credit is due to you, for her progress has been remarkable, and I am sure she beats the *patshalla* boys hollow, and has disgraced the pandits and *us*, school masters, for the long years we would take to train up a boy to that degree of progress which has just been evinced to me by Mrs. Sasi." In another letter he thus speaks of the progress made by Sasipada's widowed sister-in-law who, we saw, also commenced her studies with him within a few months of his wife: "I am much pleased to see Khira's mother write so well on her first exercise, and shall be equally glad to see the other females of our house displaying the same rapid progress. It is delightful to see how your wife as well as Khira's mother speak of the Brahmo religion. Years' prejudices are swept away as so much dust before the winds."

The reference to the Brahmo religion shows that the reforming activities of this youngman of Barahanagar was a many-sided movement and that at the time when this letter was written he was already in sympathy with the principles of the Brahmo Samaj, though he openly joined it some time after.

But to return to the subject of female education in the Banurji family at Barahanagar. The difficulties at first raised on his way began gradually to vanish before the earnest enthusiasm, dogged persistence of purpose, and admirable devotion to duty manifested in all his undertakings by this young reformer. "Those who had nothing but

taunting remarks," says Mr. Wilson, "against it when it was commenced, now began to look at it with interest, and even the more elderly females of the house began to pass hours with their first Bengali primer. This was a sight never to be forgotten—what an earnestness did they show in attempting to master difficult spellings! Sasipada's brother Kedar Nath was at that time at Muzaffarpur, where he had been for a change. In a letter dated Muzaffarpur, the 3rd Chyet, (1865) he wrote thus about the work which was being silently carried on in the house:—'I am highly delighted to learn from *bow* (sister-in-law) that Abinash's mother and many other women of our house are learning near *bow* and your wife. For they who were once against us in our endeavours for educating the girls and grown-up females have now not only understood its importance, but have begun to prosecute their studies themselves.'" "His cousin Babu Sarada Prasad Banurji," Mr. Wilson continues, "wrote of the work in the following words in his letter dated Narail, the 18th February, 1865:—'I am very glad that almost all the members of the family have commenced educating themselves. It would be a great blessing when my mother and Natoon Khoori (the new aunt, uncle's wife) and, if possible, Bhemo Pishi (aunt, father's sister or cousin)—those staunch desisters of female education, will be brought under the discipline of your girls' school.'" And they did come under its discipline, for in a short time all of them had books in their hands, and they sat round Mr. and Mrs. Banurji for instruction. It will thus be apparent that the female education work of Barahanagar commenced with the teaching of grown-up females, many of whom were widows of the ancestral family-house of Sasipada Banurji,—a fact that introduced an altogether novel feature and worked up an altogether original line in the great social reform movement in Bengal in the last century.

But although the education of adult wives and widows formed thus the main feature of the good work that Sasipada Banurji commenced at Barahanagar, it was not solely confined to these alone. The younger and unmarried girls of the Banurji family also commenced to read with Mrs. Banurji and her sister-in-law, his niece, as we have seen, having been their first pupil. But as the influence of the good example set by his own family began to spread in the neighbourhood, girls from other families also came and joined "Mrs. Sasi's Zenana School." And our young reformer felt that the time had come to start a public school for girls at Barahanagar. "Hitherto the classes were held in the ordinary domestic manner without any form or ceremony, the pupils sitting on mats on the floor. Now some furniture was procured, and on the 19th March, 1865, the Girls' School was opened in the Pooja Dalan or Prayer Hall of the late Dinanath Nandi, a Pandit and a maid-servant being all the establishment. Krishnadhan Sen Gupta of Barahanagar was the first Pandit. The zenana teaching went on within the house, Mrs. Banurji and her sister-in-law looking after the beginners, and Mr. Banurji the more advanced class." (Wilson.)

But the opening of a public school entailed pecuniary difficulties

which had not yet troubled our reformer while he had confined his work to his domestic circle. However, pecuniary difficulties never, at any stage of his career, either damped his spirit or hindered his progress. With an implicit faith that God helps and prospers all good and earnest work, he has always rushed to carry out his noble projects without making any previous provision for funds. And funds have fortunately always followed all his bold undertakings and confirmed his faith in an ever-helping Providence. And it was so in this his initial work. However, the tact and enthusiasm with which Mr. Banurji secured help and co-operation in his philanthropic work, may be illustrated by an interesting anecdote. About the time (1865) I am noticing, there lived near Barahanagar a very wealthy Armenian jute merchant named Mr. Weskins. Mr. Banurji noticed him going every day to his office in Calcutta in his splendid carriage. One day, just at the time the big merchant was expected to pass by, the young Mr. Banurji stood by the roadside with a petition in his hand, and as soon as the gorgeous equipage came near, presented the petition to Mr. Weskins and asked him respectfully to come and visit his school. It was the right man caught at the right moment. The wealthy and generous merchant immediately got down from his carriage, inspected the school, was greatly pleased with all he saw, and granted it a monthly subscription of Rs. 5.

But the open avowal of his faith in the tenets of the Brahmo Samaj, and the consequent throwing off of his Brahmanical thread, soon brought about a strong revulsion of public sympathy at Barahanagar from the good work that this young reformer had so well inaugurated. On the 23rd of July, 1865, Babu Keshub Chandra Sen, the well-known minister of the Brahmo Samaj, delivered a lecture at the family dwelling-house of the late Gopal Mallik at Sinduriapatti, in Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta. The subject of the lecture was "The Struggles for Independence and Progress in the Brahmo Samaj", and it created so deep an impression on Sasipada, who went to hear it, calling up all the dormant enthusiasm for truth and God that was in his nature, and giving a form to his inward convictions, that he at once decided upon joining the great religious and social movement of which Keshub Chunder Sen was then the leader and principal spokesman; and as a practical proof of his fidelity to the new light, he threw off his Brahmanical thread. It was a very bold, a seemingly foolhardy act in those days for a youngman thus to cut himself off from his family and early surroundings. But the brave and heroic band of youngmen who followed Keshub Chandra Sen were so much possessed by the new truths that he preached, that they broke asunder all ties even as so many ropes of ashes. But there were not many, even in that noble and heroic band, who had to undergo such severe and persistent persecutions at the hands of their friends and relations as this young Brahmana of Barahanagar. The story of these persecutions, however interesting, cannot be told here. All that need be noticed here, in connection with Babu Sasipada's female education work, is that by his conversion to Brahmoism, the little

school at Barahanagar "received a severe shock; the zenana class for grown-up females at once dispersed, and all its pupils threw away their books and writing materials, not again to be touched for fear of contamination from Sasipada and his wife." An Englishman writ ng to the *Indian Mirror*, at that time the principal English organ of Keshub Chandra Sen and his followers, said: "A sudden stop was put to its (school's) progress by the fact of the founder having embraced Brahmoism. A revulsion of feeling took place; all the pupils of the zenana and many from the school were withdrawn, and all were warned from further contact with the heretic who had forsaken his ancestral religion" But the leaders of Barahanagar Society, who felt themselves humiliated and outraged by Sasipada's conduct. did not leave the matter even here. They threatened the Pandit. who was a native of the place, with excommunication, if he continued to teach Sasipada's school. And "the poor man with disheartened look came one morning to Sasipada to say that he could not any longer stay at his post."

But Sasipada was not the man to be put out by these petty persecutions. He sympathised with the poor man, gave him permission to resign his place in the school, and immediately went out to Calcutta in search of a successor to come and take his place. A man was soon found and "the school or rather the benches (for excepting his niece and one or two more girls none were then to be seen) had not to go without a teacher for a single day." Foiled thus in their attempt to close the school by scaring away the Pandit, the orthodox party at Barahanagar began to try their influence with the proprietor of the house where it was being held. And as the result of this, "one fine morning all the benches and other furniture were put out of the school room and left scattered in the court-yard," the landlady explaining it to Sasipada that "the leaders of society would not allow the school to be held any longer in her house, and therefore the furniture must be at once removed and the school closed." Nothing daunted by this fresh persecution, Sasipada ran about the whole town to find accomodation for the school, and it was not without great difficulty that he could persuade the widow of one Umacharan Nandi to let her outhouse for the purpose, and with a view to outwit his persecutors he at once got an agreement executed by her in due form for a term of one year, during which time she could not remove the school from that place. The furniture was immediately removed to the new house and the school opened in its proper time. "The leaders of the other party then met to devise plans to oust him from this place, and they in a body waited upon the late Babu Krishnamohan Mukhurji, the Zamindar, with a view to get his assistance in the matter. The land-lady of the place was summoned, and she was ordered not to allow her place to the school. But this she could not do, as Sasipada had got a firm footing on the premises by virtue of the written agreement.

A teacher was thus appointed who would not be scared away by his persecutors; and a place was secured for the school from which

his opponents could not oust him. But what about the girls? The orthodox party made a house to house visitation, dissuading guardians from sending their girls to the school. This last devise succeeded. Not a girl would come, and for months together his niece was the only pupil that the school had. Any other man would have, under these circumstances, given up the work as hopeless. But Sasipada had ever an extraordinary amount of confidence in himself and faith in the final success, in God's world, of all work that has for its object the service of his children. He knew that he had simply to wait and he would win. So, though not a single girl would come to his school, he never relaxed his efforts. Every day the teacher would be at his place and the maid-servant would go round from house to house, asking the girls to come. And gradually they did commence to come to school one after another. And no sooner a girl came to school, Sasipada knew well how to keep her there. Like Mr. Bethune and Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, the two illustrious founders of the Bethune Female School, Sasipada also made presents of dolls, sweets, slates, books, and even of costly and much-prized Dacca clothes, to the girls who came This at once acted as a bait for others, and had its effect; for, by means of this, the maid-servant of the school, who also received a capitation allowance for the girls brought by her, could now persuade the mothers to send their girls to the school, even though their husbands were opposed to it, while the girls themselves were also now exceedingly eager to come, "not for the education which was imparted, but for the presents they received." So, "at the time of the first Annual Distribution of Prizes, which took place on the 10th September, 1866, presided over by the late Professor Lobb of the Presidency College, Calcutta, 57 pupils formed the strength of the school, divided into four classes." Referring to this ceremony, an Englishman, who was present at the meeting, thus wrote to a morning paper:—"The heart of the young reformer was not to be discouraged by persecution; but he manfully stood his ground, kept open his school, and has lived down the tyranny of his persecutors, and the result of his perseverance was last Sunday's gratifying ceremony, which was attended by a large number of his neighbours and a few European gentlemen."

Grudually the noble work of Sasipada Banurji began to attract public notice. Mr. Tuder Trevor of the Government of India, Financial Department, thus wrote of the Barahanagar School in the *Indian Mirror* of September 1866:—"The Barahanagar Girls' School traces its origin to the family of the founder, who commenced it by teaching his wife and one or two relations in his own house. It was then increased by the addition of some girls who were desirous of obtaining instruction; and so great was its success, that it was removed from the sacred precincts of the zenana,—or, to speak more correctly, zenana education was given to grown up persons, and a school for girls was opened under the superintendence of a Pandit"

The progress of English education had already created a desire in many people to impart at least some sort of education to their wives.

The Calcutta School Book Society, by the timely publication of a number of entertaining books, called the domestic standard series, helped to foster this feeling in the public mind. But while many were willing to secure the benefits of some sort of book education for their wives, few indeed knew how to set about their work. The difficulties in their way were great and many, and the opportunities were few. The publication of the report of the good work that Babu Sasipada Banurji was quietly doing in his own family and his native town, however, threw, as it were, a new light on the subject, and people in most distant parts of the province commenced to follow his methods and imitate his example. The Deputy Inspector of Schools, Bagura, thus noticed this new feature in the work of female education in his own district in his report for the year 1866-67 :—

"I will particularly notice the village of Adamdighi, where the Gossains and the Sanyals and the Chaudharies are privately teaching their wives and sisters to read and write. I can name many other villages where similar interest has been displayed, but I shall content myself with noticing two or three instances that fell under my own personal observation. Only a few days ago a native Deputy Magistrate of the station called on me and asked for a copy of *Shishu Shiksha*, part II., and in the course of conversation I learnt that he had commenced giving instruction to his wife. About the same time an *amla* aged about 40 years sent for a copy of *Shishu Shiksha* and a slate, and I came subsequently to know that he too had begun teaching his wife. A *muktiar* paid me a visit, seeking my advice as to what books ought to be put in his wife's hand as she had finished *Shishu Shiksha* and *Charitabali*."

We are also personally aware of many other instances of this kind. A number of educated youngmen of the far-away district of Sylhet, for instance, headed by the Deputy Inspector of Schools of the district, adopted about this time the Barahanagar method for the education of the female members of their families ; and real Zenana education work in Bengal may, therefore, well be said to have commenced in the small town of Barahanagar, in his own family, by our young reformer, Sasipada Banurji, long before the Christian missionaries had any idea of the plan and method which afterwards came to appropriate to itself both the name and the work of zenana education in the country.

Sasi Babu's conversion to Brahmoism and his consequent separation from the orthodox members of his family, a step in which his devoted wife most willingly followed him, notwithstanding the heart-ache and material loss that it caused, helped him very largely in the realisation of the large plans he had formed for the education of his wife. Sasipada did not, unlike the young men of his time in Bengal, receive any large amount of what may be called literary education, and he naturally set little value upon mere book-learning. The study of Nature and life was to his mind always far more important and ennobling aids to mental culture and expansion than that of books. While, therefore, he sedulously stored his wife's mind with as much book-lore as he

possibly could, he always yearned to have some favourable opportunies for putting her in communication with the larger book of Nature and the realities of human life. The prevailing custom regarding zenana seclusion, however, stood in his way. What he had already done to break through these barriers by undertaking to teach his wife and sister-in-law in open day in view of the whole family, was the utmost that could possibly be done in his parental home. As soon, however, as he left his ancestral dwelling-house, he became freer in his movements and bolder in the adoption of such measures as he thought necessary for the higher education of his wife; and when Miss Carpenter visited India for the first time in the winter of 1866-67, Sasipada took his wife to a meeting of Bengali ladies held in the house of Dr. and Mrs. Goodeve Chakravarti in Calcutta to give her a public welcome. They also attended the many evening parties held in honour of Miss Carpenter, and these were Sasipada's earliest attemp's to break through the barriers of the custom of zenana seclusion that so rigidly obtained in those days, and largely obtains still among the Hindus of Northern India.

One of these attempts and its effect may be mentioned in particular. On the 3rd May, 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Banurji called on Mr. Justice and Mrs. Phear (now Sir J. B and Lady Phear) at Baliganj by appointment, and on their way back visited the Chitpur Hospital. This was the first time for a Hindu lady to visit a public institution, and this step and the lady's visit to an English family were so revolting to the prevailing notions of the country, that the incident inspired a Bengali poet, now a distinguished leader of orthodox society, to publish an original poetical satire with the refrain "Out with thy wife, my boy," in the *Hindu Patriot* of the 18th May, 1868. It was, however, favourably received in other quarters. Miss Carpenter thus wrote of it on the 18th June, 1868:—"Your letters always give me great pleasure, for they tell me of real progress and earnest effort on your part. The last received this week was specially gratifying, as it gives me an account of your wife's first visit to a benevolent institution as well as to Mr. Justice and Mrs. Phear."

The visit of Miss Carpenter gave a great impetus to the cause of female education particularly and to social reforms generally all over the country. But none reaped a greater harvest from the precepts and noble example of that extraordinary woman than the rising reformer of Barahanagar. The two kindred spirits soon found out each other and great and far-reaching was the result of the mutual acquaintance and friendship that grew up between them. The benefits were no doubt far more on the side of the young Hindu reformer than his far-famed English friend of ripe experience and infinite opportunities. But from the long and intimate correspondence that ensued between the two friends and from passages in her works and biography, the English philanthropist seems clearly to have been, on her side, influenced not a little by her Hindu friend. From the very first Miss Carpenter seems to have found out a worker of the true stamp in Mr. Banurji, a man of indomitable courage and earnestness—and also to have dis-

covered the main secret—in a human sense—of his strength and perseverance, namely his having a truly reformed home. When noticing, in her *Six Months in India*, her visit to Mr. Banurji's girls' and boys' schools at Barahanagar, she says: "Though it was becoming late, my young friend would not allow me to depart without a visit to his abode, as his lady was expecting me there. And well indeed was I rewarded for any trouble I may have taken to come here. For the first, and for the last time, during my visit, had I the happiness of being in a simple native dwelling which had the domestic charms of an English home." As to the influence exerted on Miss Carpenter by her association with Mr. Banurji, the following cutting from Prof. Estlin Carpenter's biography of Miss Carpenter will be interesting:—

"There, (at Miss Carpenter's house) in the long summer days, Mr. and Mrs. Banurji took up their abode; and there, while Mary Carpenter was expounding the progress of Female Education in India to the Social Science Association at Leeds, was born a little son on whom was bestowed the name of Albion. All the deep affections of which there was such a wealth in her heart, flowed forth upon the helpless infant, and on the parents who were so far from their own land. She often lived in a state of repression of her inmost feelings, which she yearned to have some opportunity for action which should give them vent; and in spite of the care and responsibility now thrown upon her, she was truly happy in the domestic interests which filled her home. The energies thus called forth, and the response which they in turn elicited from her visitors, helped to dissipate a certain sceptical feeling which had been slowly creeping over her respecting human nature in India, when those whom she had tried to serve seemed apathetic or promised co-operation turned into hostility. When Mr. and Mrs. Banurji, therefore, bade her adieu in January, 1872, after nearly six months' residence, she felt at first a painful void, almost though a son had gone forth from her house." What Professor Carpenter says as regards the impression made upon the lady by her Hindu friend, will be more clear from the the following extract from a letter of Miss Carpenter herself to Mr. Banurji after he and his wife had left for India:—"Your treasured letter of this morning drew from me tears of thankfulness and joy springing out of sorrow. I have always, even more than I know myself, felt drawn in close sympathy to you, believing that I saw in you one lovingly and devoutly dedicating himself to God and his fellow-men. Everything that I have seen and heard of you has entirely coincided with this first impression; when I was sorry not to see you* among those who bade me farewell at the ship as I left Calcutta, I quite understood and appreciated the cause of your absence. Dear friend, you have done me great good, for you have not only helped to fill the void caused by the departure of my dear sister to the world of spirit, and made me feel the great happiness of being truly loved, but you have helped me to rise above the sceptical feeling which has been creeping over me respecting human nature in

* Mr. Banurji did not leave his office work for the pleasure of seeing his friend off.

India, caused by the conduct of those whom I had tried to serve, or who seemed animated by a malicious desire to injure me and hinder my work. I will not think of them but of you. You will be, I trust, also the means of another great good to me. I cannot but hope, that you have touched my dear (adopted) child—by your earnest, loving and kind words to her. I have talked much with her. She will keep your letter by her for private meditations, and I have given your likeness to her to lay with it. I trust that she may turn to God and duty without the trial of severe affliction. Dear friend, I thank you for what you said and what you wrote. Yes! painful as is separation, it only draws *nearer* together in spirit those whose "according minds" are united by "the sacred tie" which God has himself woven."

Meanwhile the female education work at Barahanagar continued with unabated ardour on the part of Mr. Banurji and also multiplied in range and breadth. Mr. Banurji established a second Girls' School at Kutighata, known as South Barahanagar, and began in his home that work of helping and educating widows which latterly developed into the Home for Widows. One of the three widows he helped about this time (1868) was his own niece, the daughter of a female cousin, both of whom were pupils of the home education class established by Mr. Banurji in his ancestral family house. The romantic account of the troubles and persecutions that followed these ladies' joining their Brahmo relatives and the younger one's getting re-married to a Brahmo gentleman, may be told hereafter. Brief mention of some of Mr. Banurji's activities about this time in other spheres—for these were multifarious and evoked as much energy as his female education work—will be found in their proper places in this pamphlet.

About this time (1867) Mr. Banurji established a Female Circulating Library in his native town. He noticed that the new generation of housewives in the higher castes consisted largely of young girls who had received some elementary education—the result of the movements for female education mentioned above. For such girls further education at school was an impossibility, and the only way to help them was the foundation of a circulating library affording them facilities for improving their minds by home study. The library, therefore, must have done a good deal of service at a time when books were rare and the few that existed difficult to procure. It was afterwards amalgamated with the Public Library which Mr. Banurji subsequently established at Barahanagar.

The visit of Miss Carpenter to India gave, as I have already mentioned, a great impetus to the female education and social progress movements, though, as will be seen by and by, the direct result was greatly minimised by the narrowness and shortsightedness of some of the leading workers in the field. The lady proposed to government the establishment of a number of female normal schools. She at once saw that the absence of female teachers was the greatest obstacle to the progress of female education in the country. The manners and customs of the country made it impossible that male teachers could do much in the field or

even be largely employed in the work. In a printed letter addressed to her Indian friends before leaving the country—a letter dated Government House, 4th January, 1867,—she writes: "The subject of female education was the leading motive which prompted my visit to the country. I discovered in the first girls' school I entered in India the grand obstacle to its advancement in the want of female teachers, and I saw the absolute necessity of measures being promptly taken to ensure a permanent supply of them."

Having proposed her scheme to the Government of India, Miss Carpenter left the country, leaving the task of promoting the movement to a committee of enlightened native gentlemen appointed by her at a conference held at Government House. Mr. Banurji was an active member of this committee and worked most enthusiastically to realise its object. Lord Lawrence, the then Governor-General of India, was warmly in favour of the scheme and sanctioned a monthly grant of rupees one thousand in its support for each of the three provinces of Bengal, Madras and Bombay for five years. It was proposed to open a Female Normal Class in connection with the Bethune School and a notice appeared in one of the papers specially intended for females, inviting pupils to be trained as female teachers. The Education Department, however, though it sanctioned the opening of the class, was really apathetic to the movement. Though inviting pupils, it offered no stipends, —a step found necessary even at the present time, when so much progress has been made in female education,—and thus ensured the failure of the movement. On the other hand, there began an opposition which the friends of female education had not foreseen. It came from such unexpected quarters as the committee of the Bethune School, Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar and Babu Kesavchandra Sen. They, though differing from one another in many ways, united in opposing the Government scheme. In proof of my statement, which may seem astounding to some, I shall again quote from a letter of Miss Carpenter (dated 1st August, 1867) to Mr. Banurji. "The Bethune (School) committee is the real obstacle to everything about the Normal School." In another letter, (dated 8th September of the same year,) she says: "The cause of female education is sadly kept back by the bigotry of a few influential men, but it will prevail if those who are true and earnest unite together and never rest till something effective is done. If Kesavchandra Sen would take up the cause *practically*, he might effect very much. Do urge him to it. I am surprised that he has not written to me." It must be noted that Babu Kesavchandra did not think, as the Bethune School Committee and Pandit Vidyasagar did, that the country was not ripe for such a scheme, but he seemed to think that the Government was not the right party to which the scheme should be entrusted. He established an Adult Female School of his own and gave no support to the Government scheme. This was most unfortunate, for, as he led the progressive native thinkers of the day, the fact of his keeping away from the movement had a most damping influence on the minds of the little band of reformers that was rising in the

country, and it may almost be said that the progress of the province was pushed back about half a century. On the other hand, Madras and Bombay fully availed of the opportunity and opened those normal schools which have helped them to be so much ahead of this province at the present time. One cannot but deeply regret the harm thus done to the cause of female education in Bengal. What might not have been done if the opportunities then offered by Government were availed of! The fact is, Babu Kesavchandra's opposition practically hindered all people of reformed views who might have availed themselves of the opportunity in behalf of their daughters or other female wards, from doing so, and, on the other hand, his own school did not prosper, and was soon closed or ceased to be what it professed to be. Pandit Vidyasagar's opposition was not less harmful. The following extract from a letter to Mr. Banurji (dated Dec. 12, 1868) from a high English official who took a warm interest in the education of native females, will make his (Pandit Vidyasagar's) position clear: "Last night I had some conversation with the Lt. Governor, and to my surprise learned from him that as yet absolutely nothing has been done in the matter of the Female Normal School or even with regard to the Bethune School! Various reasons are assigned for this inactivity. That most prominently put forward by Mr. Grey is that Miss Carpenter has not replied to a communication which was sent to her in England! But the real truth clearly is that Mr. Grey is under the influence of Pandit Vidyasagar, who maintains that Hindu society is not yet ripe for an adult female school, whether normal or otherwise. This is much to be deplored, and I shall not cease to combat the Pandit's views." Pandit Vidyasagar's great influence in educational matters in those days is well-known, and it was clearly through his influence that the Education Department worked only half-heartedly in the matter of the Female Normal School. The attitude of the Bethune School Committee has already been referred to, and it may be added that when the arrangements for the Normal School—arrangements which were destined to come to nothing—were in progress, the Committee was dissolved and men of broader and more reformed views were taken into the Consultive Committee which the Government formed for the management of the school. I have already mentioned Mr. Banurji's activity in connection with the movement. I have now to add that the high official already referred to, when he was asked by Government to submit a few suggestions on the subject, asked Mr. Banurji to do so, and he gladly consented and wrote a valuable letter to that official, embodying his views on the subject. All these efforts, however, came to nothing, as already mentioned, on account of the ill-conceived opposition related above.

About this time there was, in Calcutta, an Englishman of a very high and noble character and of the most broad and liberal views. All the noblest traits of the true English character were reflected in him. His sympathy with all efforts for the improvement of native society was most hearty and he freely gave his time and energies to helping such movements. In his own way, he may be said to have done for

the education of grown up Hindu women what Mr. J. E. D. Bethune did for the education of Hindu girls. The Englishman I speak of is Sir John Phear, who was at that time a Judge of the High Court. Sir John's relations with Mr. Banurji were and are still of the most cordial nature, and the latter's gratitude for the help and sympathy that he received from the former in all the various trials and difficulties of his life, is very profound. In this noble Englishman the small band of Hindu reformers in those days found a most sympathetic friend and ever-ready helper. The movement for the higher education of Hindu females, therefore, found in him an active advocate and what has since been done in the direction owes much to his activity. Lady Phear, I may add, was a most worthy wife of her noble husband and was a constant helpmeet of his in all his philanthropic activities. The following letter, dated 1868, from Sir John to Mr. Banurji, enclosing some subscription in aid of the latter's literary and educational activities at Barahanagar, will show his appreciation of Mr. Banurji's philanthropic labours : "You remark," says Sir John, "upon my having offered you this small assistance unsolicited ; I did so, simply because I have watched you now for sometime and am convinced that you are working most unselfishly and earnestly under difficult circumstances. Your objects are excellent, your efforts sound and well-directed, and I feel that I ought not any longer to stand by without tendering you both my hearty sympathy with you in what you are doing for your countrymen and showing you that I think you ought not to be left to bear your burden alone." More particular mention of Sir John and Lady Phear's work will be found later on.

In 1870 Babu Kesavchandra Sen visited England and, by his public speeches and conversations with Englishmen and Englishwomen of light and leading, greatly interested them in the cause of social progress in India. While at Bristol, Mr. Sen joined in the ceremony of founding the National Indian Association, which has been helping female education work in India in a variety of ways ever since its foundation. After his return to the country, Babu Kesavchandra established the Indian Reform Association and opened a Female Normal School under the auspices of its Female Improvement section. This school continued for a number of years and did good work as a Girl and Adult School. But on the raising of the Bethune School to the status of a High School and subsequently of a College, it was practically closed. It was, however, succeeded by a Girls' School called the Victoria School, of somewhat intermittent existence, and by an organisation of the same nature—I mean of the same flickering vitality—called the "Victoria College for the High Education of Females," which consists of lectures, serial or occasional, on scientific and other subjects, delivered by well-known professors or preachers.

In 1871 Babu Sasipada Banurji visited England with his wife, who was the first Hindu lady to visit that country. This visit promoted the cause of female education both directly and in-

directly. Mrs. Banurji's bold conduct must have had a far-reaching result in effectively breaking open the iron doors of the zenana and encouraging her countrywomen to fearlessly go on in their pilgrimage of progress. As a fact, she was gradually followed by several of them, who visited both Great Britain and the Continent either for study or travel. The National Indian Association in their first annual report thus mentioned Mr. Banurji's visit to England :—

"In the same month (June, 1871) Babu Sasipada Banurji visited Bristol with his wife, the first Brahman lady who has crossed the ocean. In August Mr. Banurji visited Birmingham, Walsall, Manchester, Bolton, and Liverpool, giving addresses on the social condition of India in each place. In Birmingham and Manchester, branches were formed and committees appointed. In September he addressed a public meeting in Trowbridge, and a branch was formed there. In October he visited Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, and Sheffield, in each of which places a branch was formed and a committee elected. In all these places considerable interest appeared to have been excited, which may eventually be developed into useful action. In the present month (November, 1871), Mr. Banurji has addressed the ladies of Clifton and Bristol, who have formed themselves into an Auxiliary of this Association in aid of female education, and arranged for a working party to meet monthly at the houses of different ladies, in promotion of the objects. The first of these meetings has just taken place. The intentions of the Association have thus been carried out more extensively than could have been anticipated." I may add that many of these branches continued to work for several years after Mr. Banurji's return to the country.

On his return from England, Mr. Banurji, resumed his old work with renewed energy. "Such was his love for his work," says Mr. Wilson, "that he politely declined the kind offer of a Deputy Magistracy made to him by Sir George Campbell (then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal) simply because he felt he could not leave Barahanagar. At this time he opened a branch Girls' School at Kutighata, in the southern portion of Barahanagar, and thus extended the operations of the school to quarters hitherto untouched by his influence."

As could be expected, the movement attracted the notice and sympathy of Government and thereby had an increased importance in the eyes of the native public. Mr. Wilson says in his pamphlet :— "Lord Northbrook took much interest in the school and granted several private interviews to Mr. and Mrs. Banurji with a view to inquire about his good works at Barahanagar. His daughter, the Hon'ble Miss Baring, very kindly paid a visit to the school on the 7th February, 1874, which was looked upon as a great personal honour done to Mr. Banurji and also not a small encouragement to his work. She further showed her kindness by presenting him with a photograph of herself and another of His Excellency the Viceroy. The school also received the patronage and support of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Richard Temple, who at the invitation of Babu Sasipada, paid a kind visit to Barahanagar on the 16th December 1876, when the latter on

behalf of the town read out to His Honour an address signed by all the leading and respectable inhabitants of Barahanagar, to which Sir Richard Temple made a suitable reply. His Honor also distributed the prizes to the Girls' School the same day and thus showed his interest in Mr. Banurji's work. His Honor had always been a great patron and kind friend to Babu Sasipada. The good work done by Babu Sasipada had also some recognition from the royal family. The Princess Alice and her sister the Crown Princess of Prussia once sent a number of portraits and other presents to Mr. Banurji's school to show their sympathy in Hindu Female education."

It may be mentioned here that later on, in January 1877, on the occasion of the assumption by the late Queen Victoria of the title of Empress of India, the Government showed its recognition of Mr. Banurji's services to the country by granting him the following Certificate of Honor :—

"By command of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General this certificate is presented in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Empress of India, to Babu Sasipada Banurji in recognition of his services rendered to the public in connection with various benevolent projects."

In 1873 an educated English lady of a philanthropic bent of mind came to India and became the guest of Sir John and Lady Phear. Her name was Miss Annie Akroyd. She is now Mrs. H. Beveridge. Mr. Banurji had met her while in England and learnt her intention of visiting India to study and, if possible, help the female education work here. She now came to carry out her object, and her services were eagerly availed of by the small band of reformers who were disappointed by the failure of the scheme for improving the Bethune School. A school called the 'Hindu Mahila Vidyalay' was opened by them under her superintendence at Baliganj near Calcutta. The Committee included Sir John Phear as President and Lady Phear as Secretary. This may be said to be the beginning of the movement for the higher education of grown-up Hindu ladies. But as had happened in the case of the Female Normal School scheme, the orthodox party kept away from the movement, and even Babu Kesavchandra held himself aloof from it. But the school continued and did its noble work for a number of years till the retirement of Sir John and Lady Phear led to its being closed. Mr. Banurji was a most active member of its Committee and helped and sympathised with Miss Akroyd in all her trials and difficulties. Miss Carpenter granted £50 per annum for two years to the school in aid of widows intending to be trained as teachers, and Mr. Banurji had the charge of nominating widows for the stipends, which were worth Rs. 30 each per month. The closing of this school left a gap which was soon filled up by the establishment of the 'Banga Mahila Vidyalay' in 1876 chiefly through the exertions of Messrs. Durgamohan Das and Anandamohan Basu. To the former and to his first wife the country owes a debt of deep gratitude for services to the cause of female progress, and many an educated

lady who now possesses a happy home, thankfully acknowledges it as due to them. Mr. Banurji was not then in Calcutta and could not therefore actively serve this institution, which, as we shall see by and by, actually introduced the high education of women into Indian society. But he was in constant correspondence with the members of the Committee and had the heartiest sympathy with their aims and objects. It may be mentioned by the way that it was at this Institution and at its predecessor that the second Mrs. Banurji was educated before her marriage.

It needs hardly to be mentioned that Mr. Banurji's work for the cause of female education was not confined to Barahanagar and Calcutta, but that he sympathised with the other workers in the field who laboured in different parts of the country, and helped them according to his power. In November, 1874, he visited the Girls' and Adult Female School at Dacca, established by the local Philanthropic Society and made a number of useful presents to it. Prof. W. B. Livingstone, the President of the Philanthropic Society, thanked him for these presents in a letter in which he said, "We are much encouraged by your sympathy and kindness."

In 1876, the National Indian Association established a Bengal Branch with Mr. Banurji as its Corresponding Secretary. He was in fact the chief worker of the Bengal Branch, and its rules and scheme of work owed their existence to him. In 1878 it was found necessary to put new life into it after a period of dullness, and for this purpose Mr. Banurji read a paper in one of it meetings, making a few suggestions of work on new lines. Three of these suggestions were carried out. One of these was the appointment of two zenana teachers who went about visiting zenana ladies and imparting knowledge to them on a non-sectarian basis. The need for such zenana teachers is keenly felt now-a-days, but it is a pity that nothing is being done to revive the system of zenana teaching to which the way was shown in the aforesaid manner. If the work be properly organised and supported by private help, the Government will, no doubt, come forward to support it. There is no want of female teachers now, the number of educated ladies having greatly increased during the last few years, and the Government is already spending a good deal of money in aid of the Christian Zenana Missions, whose services are being more and more deprecated by non-Christians. It may therefore be hoped that an attempt to revive the system and place it on a firm footing will meet with success. The second suggestion of Mr. Banurji that was carried out, was the publication of a number of suitable books for females under the title of the 'Mary Carpenter Series.' Handsome prizes were offered to the authors and the result was the appearance of such meritorious books as Pandit Sivanath Sastri's *Mejobau*, Babu Dvarakanath Ganguli's *Suruchir Kutir* and Pandit Rajanikanta Gupta's *Panbandhakusum*. The third work taken up by the Bengal Branch at Mr. Banurji's suggestion was the formation of a Committee of ladies and gentlemen who undertook the task of visiting girls' schools and zenana students and encouraging them by prizes and stipends.

I have noticed above once or twice Sir John and Lady Phear's activity in the cause of native female education. The time now came for these two sincere friends of India to return to their country. On this occasion the Bethune Society, of which Sir John was President, and which aimed, among other things, at the very noble object of promoting union between Europeans and the natives of the country, held a meeting at the theatre of the Medical College to take measures to commemorate his services. Another meeting was held for a similar purpose at the house of Mr. Manomohan Ghosh by native ladies headed by Maharani Svarnamayi and Maharani Bhubanesvari of Nadia, at which an address was presented to Lady Phear. The following extract from the speeches made on these two occasions will show in what great esteem Sir John and Lady Phear were held by both Europeans and natives :—"Dr. K. M. Banurji, the Vice-President of the Bethune Society, said that there was not a single instance in which a Judge undertook, amidst his great and arduous duties, personally to lecture and instruct the people as Mr. Justice Phear did. Mr Woodrow, then Inspector of Schools, said that there was no one who had done more for the cause of female education in this country than Mr. Phear had done, and Mr. Woodrow hoped the people of the country would bear in mind the eminent services rendered to them by that gentleman even after he was dead. Sir R. Temple, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, concluded a long speech by expressing what he had ventured to state in another place, that was to say, at the last meeting of the Social Science Association, that Mr Justice Phear's name would remain enshrined in their memories, joined with the name of the many illustrious men who had laboured so unselfishly for the people of this country, and that his name would go down to posterity, linked with the names of such men as David Hare, Drinkwater Bethune, James Lyall, and D. L. Richardson."

From the address to Lady Phear presented at the other meeting, I make the following extract :—"It would be needless, even if it were practicable on this occasion, to enumerate the many and distinguished services rendered by yourself and Mr. Phear to the cause of female education and social advancement ever since your arrival in this country. There have been few projects or movements in Bengal in connection with those objects within the last 11 years in which yourself and Mr. Phear have not taken an active interest, and which you have not materially promoted by your labours. The extraordinary zeal which has enabled you, in a trying climate, and your husband, amid the onerous duties of his high office, to bestow so much of your time and labours upon such a cause, has ever been a subject of wonder and admiration to the people of Bengal."

The remarkable progress in female education during recent years, —the imparting of a really liberal education to our women, their submission to public tests of their acquirements equally with persons of the other sex, and the consequent yearly multiplication of female graduates and undergraduates—dates from an event which took place in 1877. It was the amalgamation of the Banganahila Vidyalay mention-

ed above with the Bethune School. The latter was then, as it had continued to be for many years, a mere primary school attended by little girls. It was visited by Lady Lytton in 1877, and it was the dissatisfaction that Her Excellency expressed at it that, perhaps more than any other thing, disclosed its unworthiness to enjoy, in its old form, the support it had been receiving for a long series of years from Government. Her Excellency's visit to two other institutions,—Babu Kesavchandra Sen's Female Normal School and the Bangamahila Vidyalaya, and her hearty recognition of the good work that was done at the latter school, led to the proposal for its amalgamation with the Bethune. The amalgamation really consisted in the Government taking over the charge of the Bangamahila, their promise to support it,—with its scheme for the high education of grown-up women and its boarding arrangements conceived according to reformed tastes, without any recognition of caste rules and necessarily somewhat 'anglicised' in form, —and its transfer to the spacious buildings of the Bethune School. It was not so much an amalgamation as an addition—the addition of a a number of higher classes and a boarding establishment to a primary school. Babu Kesavchandra's party opposed the amalgamation tooth and nail, but could not prevent it. They opposed it on the ground of the alleged unsuitable character of the education which was imparted at the Bangamahila, and which the reformed Bethune School now pledged itself to impart, and the socalled un-Hindu character of the boarding arrangements that obtained there and was now going to be perpetuated. These objections, of course, carried no weight with the supporters of the amalgamation scheme The fact is, that there already existed at the time and has since increased in extent and volume, a body of opinion on social matters much in advance of that held by Kesavchandra and his immediate followers, and it is the men that held those views, whether they called themselves Hindus, Brahmos or Christians, that now began to guide the destinies of the Bethune School. The result has been that while men of really old and orthodox views still content themselves by giving their girls the sort of primary education that is imparted in the lower classes of the Bethune College, and while Babu Keshavchandra's party still hold themselves aloof from the higher courses of the College, except in a very few solitary cases, the higher education imparted in the College is fully availed of by people of the other party, specially the Sadharan Brahmos and the Native Christians. The Boarding Institution of the College, which consists chiefly of the advanced students, is therefore, and could not but be, heterodox, and, in that sense, 'un-Hindu', as Babu Kesavchandra's party complained it was. However, the Government, as might be expected, made a few liberal concessions to the managers of the Banga Mahila Vidyalay in taking over its charge and connecting it with the Bethune. They were (1) That a daily devotional service according to the principles of the Brahmo Samaj should be allowed to be held in the school premises for the benefit of the Brahmo students, (2) that the Brahmo girls should be taken to a Brahmo place of worship every Sunday in the school omnibus, and

(3) that there should be at least three Brahmo members in the school committee and that no teacher or professor should be appointed without the consent of these three members. As it was the Brahmos who furnished the Bethune School with its higher classes, and as these classes are still mostly recruited from the Brahmo community, these concessions were nothing but just.

In 1876 the first Indian girl appeared at the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University. It was Miss Chandramukhi Basu, the daughter of Babu Bhubanmohan Basu of Dehradun. She passed the examination and became the immediate cause of the formation of the College classes in connection with the Bethune School and the opening of the doors of the Calcutta University to Indian ladies. For this last great blessing, the country is specially indebted to Lord Hobhouse, then Vice-Chancellor of the University and a member of the Viceregal Council. The great impetus given to higher female education by this measure is too well known to require particular mention. One of its indirect results was the gradual opening of several High Schools and even a few Colleges for girls by Christian missionary and other agencies. The Government Eden Female School at Dacca was opened in 1878. In 1883 a school for Brahmo Girls was opened in the neighbourhood of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj *Mandir* through the exertions of some leading members of the Brahmo Samaj with Babu Sasipada Banurji as its Secretary. It had but a short lease of life, and was closed for want of support; but from its ashes arose the present Brahmo Girls' High School, which has secured such strong official and non-official support.

The country's debt to Miss E. A. Manning, the worthy successor of Miss Mary Carpenter in the secretaryship of the National Indian Association, deserves special mention. Her sympathy with all movements for the advancement of Indian women is most hearty, and she has always been ready with her effective support whenever and wherever an earnest effort has been made for the noble cause. Babu Sasipada's work at Barahanagar and the Brahmo Girls' School in Calcutta are specially indebted to her. Among other ladies who deserve mention for having given their hearty support to the education of Indian women, we cannot but name Lady Hobhouse, the wife of Lord Hobhouse, who, with her husband, is still working in England for this country in connection with the National Indian Association, Mrs. Colquhoun Grant, who was untired in her labours for the cause of female education in Bengal, and Mrs. J. B. Knight, who most earnestly and energetically worked for sometime as the Secretary of the Bengal Branch of the National Indian Association and who is well-known to the Indian public as the translator of Babu Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's *Durgesnandini* and of other Bengali works.

The last movement for the amelioration of Indian women we shall notice in this pamphlet, is the establishment of the Hindu Widow's Home at Barahanagar. A brief history of the Home and of the influence exerted by it on the minds of native reformers throughout the country, leading to the establishment of similar institutions in

other parts of the country, has already been given in another part of this pamphlet

I have hitherto left unnoticed two very important factors in the education and progress of native females in Bengal. The first of these is the *Bamabodhini Patrika*, with the *Sabha* that bore the same name. The *Bamabodhini* was the first organ started (1864) in the country in the interest of female progress, and it is very gratifying to see that it still continues, in all its youthful vigour, to serve our womankind and encourage them by publishing contributions from them. This noble enterprise is due to the venerable Babu Umeschandra Datta, B.A., now Principal of the City College, whose earnestness, energy and single-hearted devotion to the service of the country seem entirely unaffected by the growing infirmities of age and by irreparable domestic losses. It may be added that Babu Sasipada Banurji has earnesty helped the *Bamabodhini* in several ways from time to time. I may also mention, under this head, the short-lived though very useful *Abalabandhav*, started about 1869 by the late Babu Dvarakanath Ganguli. His devotion to the cause of female progress owned him the name of his paper, which means the 'Friend of Women'. His influence for good on the first band of educated Bengali ladies was very deep, and he will no doubt be long remembered as a sincere friend and benefactor of women. A later addition to female journalism is the *Mahila*, edited by Babu Girischandra Sen, of the New Dispensation Apostolic body. The *Antahpur*, the latest Bengali journal for women, also deserves to be mentioned here. It was started, after some trouble, by Babu Sasipada Banurji and was successively under the editorial charge of his daughters Ushabala and Banalata. Its peculiar feature is that it is written exclusively by ladies. It is now edited by Mrs. Hemantakumari Chaudhuri of Sylhet and published in Calcutta by Babu Sasibhushan Chakravarti, who has managed it ever since its editorial charge was taken by his lamented wife, Banalata Devi.

The other factor in the progress of our females referred to above, consists in the many district unions for promoting zenana education. One of these, the Sylhet Union, the first or one of the first of its kind, was mentioned in an early part of this paper. It was followed by several others, all of which have done immense service in illuminating the dark regions of the zenana. Their method consists in fixing courses of study, holding examinations under the supervision of trustworthy gentlemen who have either access to the zenanas or can control their doings and awarding prizes and scholarships to successful candidates. As suited to the tastes and customs of this province, this system has already had, and is likely to have, immense success.

We have now, before we close, only to ask the earnest and sympathising reader to look back on those dark days of blind superstition when educating one's wife and other female relatives was a sin and a shame, and when the reward meted out to the reformer was obloquy and persecution, and then turn his eyes to the present hopeful condition of the country, dotted all over with Girls' Schools and Zenana classes

of all varieties, not a few of which are under the tuition of female teachers and professors, a considerable and gradually increasing number of whom are graduates and undergraduates of the different Indian Universities. Let him look at the two pictures and be thankful to God for what he has done for us and hopeful of what is in store for us in not a very distant future. On the side of progress and reform we find the Bethune College, the highest college for women in the country, managed for several years past by Indian lady Principals, while on the other side, viz. those who still profess to adhere to the old way of thinking, not only has all active opposition to female education ceased, but there is visible a more or less earnest activity to promote the education of girls consistently with orthodox customs and modes of life. This activity is specially visible in the Mahakali Pathsalas established in Calcutta though the exertions of Mataji Tapsvini, a learned lady belonging to one of the old princely families of the country and supported by several high-placed persons in the province, and at Benares, where Mrs. Annie Besant is about to establish a School for Hindu girls as a parallel movement to her Hindu College for boys. The actual acquirements of some of our zenana ladies, for instance of poetesses like Srimatis Girindramohini Dasi and Mankumari Dasi, who stand in the forefront of Bengali authorship, is also most hopeful and inspiring to the rising generation of Bengali ladies. The last but by no means the least important sign of progress is the recent awakening from their long torpor of conservatism and inactivity, of our Muhammadan brethren, who have recently founded a largely attended school for girls under a strong and influential committee. It may be, as the latest Government resolution on education says, that there has been a decrease lately in the number of girls' schools. But in the midst of the general progress visible on all sides, such a decrease is evidently a momentary ebb, to be followed by a higher rise of the tide of progress. If the present generation of reformers gird up their loins and resolve to follow faithfully in the steps of the noble band of workers of whose work I have tried in the above sketch to give a faint picture, the onward march of the country through the amelioration of our womankind is assured under the blessing of Divine Providence.

THE WIDOW MARRIAGE MOVEMENT.

It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain, even with any degree of reasonable approximation, the time when the remarriage of widows was strictly prohibited by the Hindus, and the disabilities under which they have been labouring for centuries past, were first imposed upon them. The origin of the present movement for the amelioration of the widow's condition is clearly traceable. Contact with a foreign nation having a vigorous and dazzling civilization of their own, and the progress of English education gradually setting the the minds of the people free from the thraldom of ancient customs, they began gradually to feel the duty and necessity of adopting due measures for not only the suppression of the inhuman custom of *suttee*, but also for the removal of the disabilities under which Hindu widows even of the most tender age laboured in the matter of remarriage. In fact the very suppression of the system of *suttee* (1830) imparted a most strong impetus to the cause of widow-marriage by bringing home to the people, through direct and personal experience, the miseries of the life-long immolation imposed upon the Hindu widow, in comparison with which even the inhumanity of the system of *suttee* did not appear to be more dreadful. To tolerate any evil, one must be first of all callous to it. for we are so constituted that we cannot realise any evil and yet passively submit to it. So long as the Hindu mind, trained by ages to offer unquestioning obedience to the established customs of society, did not fully and clearly realise the evils of the prohibition that obtain in it against the remarriage of widows, it quietly submitted to it, but no sooner had the evil been brought home to it, than it became restive, and the more intrepid and humane among the people began to adopt active measures for its removal, and gradually, ten or eleven years before the time when Babu Sasipada began to exert himself in the matter, a most vigorous movement for the promotion of widow-marriage among the Hindus was set on foot in Bengal under the leadership of that well-known reformer, philanthropist and Sanskrit scholar, Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar.

But even the great Vidyasagar had a few precursers in the field of this reform. Hindu parents had always felt keenly for the sufferings of their widowed daughters, though from a pious dread of becoming unfaithful to the injunctions of the scriptures, as they understood them, none had dared to question the justice of the law that imposed these sufferings on their tender daughters. When, however, the hold of these ancient scriptural authorities on their mind became gradually weak under foreign influences, they naturally felt the injustice and inhumanity of the custom, and secretly desired its abolition. It was a father who, unable to bear the painful sight of a tender-aged widow in his house, first of all publicly sought to invoke the authority of the Shastras in favour of his youthful daughter's remarriage. His name was Babu Shyamacharan Das, and a proposition was circulated, at his instance, among the Pandits of the country, enquiring—" Whether

the widowed daughter of a Sudra who had not known her husband and who was unable to practise the higher virtue of concremation with her husband's corpse, or endurance of the hardships of a life of widowhood, could be remarried agreeably to the Shastras?" The question was discussed at a public meeting of the Pandits held in the house of Raja Sir Radhakanta Dev, the leader, in those days, of Hindu orthodoxy in Calcutta. The result was the issue of a *páti* or certificate of permission, in extremely guarded language, signed by a number of Pandits. It applied to the case of Sudra girls only, and even as such, it was disowned and practically laid aside by the promulgators.

But a scholar of a very different stamp, a fearless thinker and reformer, soon stepped into the place of these timid and half-hearted men. The cry of the distressed widow, heard unceasingly and getting louder day after day, led Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, under the inspiration of his extremely tender-hearted and saintly mother, to make a most searching inquiry into the subject, as treated of in the scriptures of the Hindus. The results of his inquiries were embodied in a big pamphlet wherein he proved that, according to the law of Parasara, which was the main law, according to Hindu authorities, for the present age, the remarriage of widows of all castes was permissible. The publication of the pamphlet caused an immense sensation in the country. Some enlightened and educated reformers hailed it with intense delight, while many, the leaders of orthodoxy, the hereditary exponents of the scriptures, ranged themselved violently against it and many came forward to protest against the heriticial and revolutionary opinions broached by a young scholar of an obscure village in the interior, without fortune or fame, and without any pretensions to entitle him to the great honour and importance that he was in a fair way of earning in preference to greyheaded and recognised expounders of the ancient law. Replies to Vidyasagar's pamphlet followed fast one upon another; and what is infinitely more to be deplored, those very Pandits who had written out and attested the rule granted to Babu Shyamacharan Das in favour of the remarriage of his daughter, now ranged themselves on the side of the opposition to Vidyasagar's movement. A second pamphlet was written and published by Pandit Isvarchandra, answering all the objections that had been raised by his critics against his decision. It was based upon ancient and accepted Sastric authorities. He proved the accuracy of his authorities, and the validity of his interpretations of the scriptural texts cited in his favour and it has been very truly said that "whether we consider the chaste and clear style in which the pamphlets are written, the extent of learning to which they testify, the precision of his ideas and expressions, the lucidity of his arrangements, his dialectic powers, his masterly grasp of the subject, and his truly Hindu manner of treating it, they stand unrivalled in the annals of Bengali literature, and will remain a monument of his talents and erudition."* In these treatises the young and scholarly reformer not only cited Shastric authorities in favour of the reform

* This and the other quotations that follow immediately, are from an article by the late celebrated educationist, Professor Pyaricharan Sarkar, in the *Well-wisher* for September, 1865.

advocated by him, but also, painting in the most vivid and yet faithful colours "the lacerated feelings, the debased affections, the lamentable failings, and the horrible inequities that blacken the character of Hindu widowhood, and in which, with all their repugnance, people are forced to participate," he made an eloquent and impassioned appeal to the humanity of his educated countrymen, "to cast off the yoke of fiendish custom, to respond to the calls of reason and virtue, and to adopt a course which conscience approves and religion enjoins." His methods were at once rational and national. Whilst advocating the boldest innovation, "he conciliated the most jealous conservatism," and while introducing a startling change into a society peculiary sensitive to any interference from within or without with its practices and habits, all of which have from time immemorial been assigned a religious character, he took his stand upon the honoured and accepted authorities on the subject, obedience to whom has ever been recognised as a pious function by every Hindu. The history of Hindusm does not lack in instances of occasional reforms, some of which have been of the boldest and most radical character. The reforms of Shankara in the theology of the Hindus, and those of Chaitanya, Nanaka and Kabira in more modern times, have all been, in their way, of the most radical character, and have all left their lasting mark upon the life and character of the Hindu people brought within the sphere of their respective influences; and the secret of their success lay in the one simple fact that they all took their stand upon ancient authorities, and maintained with great care and wisdom their relations with the past and the traditions of their people. Every successful reformer, every discerning leader has, in all ages, taken advantage of the flexible nature of the scriptures of the Hindu religion and the internal organisation of Hindu society, in promulgating his reform. "A proposition addressed to consenting religious feelings is sure to be the most grasping in its hold and the most enduring in its influence, while one of an opposite tendency, in spite of all its rationality and wisdom, is the last to be received and the first to be renounced if accident or any peculiar combination of circumstances ever leads to its introduction." The system of austerities included in the term *brahmacharya*, enjoined upon the Hindu widow of the higher classes, had the sanction both of antiquity and religion. Vidyasagar, in attacking the venerable institution, did not, like his predecessors, urge mere expediency or humanity, though he referred incidentally to both, but sought to work upon the religious instincts of his people by laying before them the injunctions, on this point, of their own honoured scriptural and legal authorities. And his method has succeeded for a time and, indeed, has secured the acceptance and allegiance of the more wise and educated of his countrymen to the reform advocated by him for all times. People came forward to avail themselves of the authority found by him for the remarriage of Hindu widows. But the Hindu law in force in the British courts having been based upon the popular notions of the Pandits of the times, had no sanction or provision in it for such marriages, and persons marrying under the Shastric authority discovered and promulgated by Pandit Vidyasagar, ran the very serious risk of imposing the ban of illegitimacy upon their children. "The Hindu population might venerate the injunctions of the *Parasara*

Sanhita, but Collectors, Magistrates and Judges of other persuasions, and in fact, any government officer, in the absence of an enactment of the British Legislature, could not be expected to pay much regard to the voice of a Hindu lawgiver faintly echoed from the depths of the remotest antiquity." The removal of the legal obstacles was thus an absolute necessity, and Pandit Isvarchandra exerted himself in this direction. He had already earned the respect and admiration, no less by the strength of his character than by the extent of his scholarship, of the Government of the country, and had many friends among the most influential members of that body. Among these were many members of the Legislative Council, who took a warm and active interest in his movement; and they all promised their support and co-operation to any attempts that might be initiated by Vidyasagar for the legalisation of Hindu widow-marriages. A petition signed by 984 Hindus of Bengal, headed by Pandit Isvarchanda Vidyasagar having been presented to the Legislative Council, along with a draft bill legalising widow-marriages among Hindus, the Hon'ble J. P. Grant, who had all along sympathised with the efforts of this great Brahmana reformer, undertook to carry it through the Council. Other petitions followed from other parts of the country, and in all, the signatories to these petitions counted 5,302 persons. Nor were the opponents of the cause less active, and counter petitions, to the number of 33, containing signatures of over 56,000 persons, were also presented to the Government; and to the more timid followers of the good cause, it appeared for a time impossible that Government should carry a measure in accordance with the wishes of five thousand persons against those of fifty thousand. But there was a peculiarity in the case which put all considerations of mere numbers absolutely beyond its province. The Honourable mover of the Bill very clearly pointed out that "He did not mean to say that the wishes of 60,000 petitioners should be disregarded, merely because they opposed a measure which he approved; but it was right that the council should observe that, of all the number, there was not one who, unless he changed his opinions, could be said to have, in any fair sense of the term, any individual or personal interests in the measure. On the other hand, of the 5,000 persons who had petitioned in favour of the Bill, there was not one who could not be said to have, in the fairest and truest sense of the term, a strong individual and personal interest in it. There was not one of them who, if the council should refuse to pass this Bill, might not hereafter have occasion to call it to account for having refused to do that which would have saved the domestic happiness, and perhaps the honour of his family." So strong indeed were the feelings of the English members of the council in favour of Pandit Vidyasagar's measure, (and in fact, they had the warmest sympathy with, and took an active part in, all movements of social reform in the country,) that referring to the objection that the seekers of legislative interference were so few and had so little influence with the people, that the passing of the Act would be followed by very little practical results, the Honble Mr. Colvin, from his place on the council, said that, "if he knew certainly that but one little girl would be saved from the horrors of *brahmacharya* by the passing of his Act, he would pass it for her sake. If he believed as firmly as he

believed the contrary, that the Act would be wholly a dead letter, he would pass it for the sake of the English name."

The Bill was passed by the council on the 19th of July 1856, and received the assent of the Viceroy seven days after. "The advocates of widow-marriage were not slow to prove that their application for legislation was not an idle demonstration of hollow liberalism, and that the law was not to remain a dead letter", and within five months of the passing of the Act, the first widow-marriage was celebrated under the anspices of Pandit Vidyasagar's movement. The bridegroom was Pandit Srishchandra Vidyaratna, the son of a well-known Pandit, Ramdhan Tarkabagish, and himself a distinginshed Sanskrit scholar, then holding the respectable post of Hindu law-officer of the Moorshidabad circle, in Bengal, while the bride also came of a most respectable Brahmana family connected with the *gurus* or spiritual guides of the Rajas of Nadiya. Three other marriages followed it in the next three months and in all about twenty-five marriages were celebrated during the first five years following the passing of the Act of 1856; and the largest number of these were among the most respectable classes of Hindu Society, namely, the Brahmanas and the Kayasthas. Judged by mere numbers, the success that attended the efforts of Pandit Vidyasagar was very encouraging, but the whole movement was morally very weak, for most of the persons who married under his auspices received ample pecuniary assistance from him, and not a few of them were even tempted to marry widows purely for the settlement which that large-hearted Pandit made upon those who married under his auspices, a circumstance which, while it proved the spirit of generosity which was such a prominent feature in the character of that great man, at the same time contributed very largely to sow the seeds of a fatal weakness in the very heart of his reform work. Instances have not been rare when the men who married a widow under Pandit Vidyasagar's anspices, actually threatened to desert their wives and children if their most unreasonable demands for money were not met by him. Even as the pecuniary gains conferred upon Christian converts of the early ages by the Emperor Constantine the Great, led to the moral degradation of that new reform, so—to compare great things with s nall ones—did the offers of pecuniary help so generously made by Pandit Isvarchandra to all those who married widows according to orthodox Hindu rites, led to a fatal weakness of his movement, which may be said to have practically died out, at least in Bengal, long before the death of the illustrious reformer who first set it on foot.

But though Pandit Vidyasagar was the first to advocate the cause of Hindu widow-marriage in Bengal, he was not the only person who laboured in behalf of this cause. The Brahma Samaj, under the leadership of Babu Kesavchandra Sen, soon took up this cause and up to date the largest number of widow marriages in the country have been celebrated under its auspices. Three years after the passing of Pandit Vidyasagar's Act, Babu Kesavchandra Sen took up this cause in his hands, and with his characteristic energy, threw himself heart and soul into the movement. He composed a drama on the subject and put it on the stage and opened the performance to the public in 1859. The plot of the play represented the miseries of a

Hindu widow shut up in the zenana, who, in her solitary and friendless condition, formed an attachment with a young neighbour, by whom she was enticed away to a life of sin. The concluding scenes depicted, in lively colours, her sufferings, her confessions, and her suicide, with an appeal, in Kesav's best style, to all patriotic people to put an end to the forced celebacy of the Hindu widows. The play, as might be expected, created an immense sensation among the public, and led to the adoption, by the Brahma Samaj, of the cause of the remarriage of Hindu widows as a part of the programme of the social reform work of that body.

The first widow-marriage under the auspices of the Brahma Samaj was celebrated in the year 1864, and within the next five years, eight other marriages were celebrated. Judged by mere numbers, the progress of the movement under the Brahma Samaj may naturally appear to have been slower than that under the auspices of Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar. But the inferiority of these marriages in numbers was more than amply made up by the superior moral ideals and the keener struggles that guided and attended them. The widows were, without a single exception, members of the orthodox community; and in every case most vigorous and risky efforts had to be put forth for bringing them over to the Brahma Samaj. Unlike the marriages celebrated by Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, those that took place under the auspices of the Brahma Samaj had rarely any help from the parents and relations of the widows, but, on the contrary, had to be celebrated almost invariably in the face of the most cruel and bitter opposition from them. Many a widow had literally to be "stolen" from their parents' house, and the history of their rescue will ever remain as a great monument of the moral enthusiasm and devotion to the cause of suffering humanity, of the early members of the Brahma Samaj. Of the work of one of these members we intend to speak more fully than of the rest, for he soon became one of the most prominent workers in the field, and the history of widow-marriage and the education of Hindu widows in Bengal in the years that followed the time we are noticing, became more or less identified with his labours.

Babu Sasipada Banurji, for it is to him that we refer, had been an advocate of the widow-marriage movement ever since his boyhood. We find it mentioned in his autobiographical notes that he, a boy of fifteen, rejoiced exceedingly when the Widow-marriage Bill became law, and that when the first widow-marriage was solemnized, he came from his native town of Barahanagar in the company of a number of boys of his age to witness the ceremony, and though the great crowd that had gathered before the wedding place prevented him from getting an entrance, he seemed to be present in the ceremony in spirit, and heartily enjoyed it. The first widow-marriage that this born reformer first promoted and took part in was that of his own niece, Kusumkumari. The incident is full of romantic interest and I shall narrate it with details as I have heard it from Mr. Banurji himself. But before giving those details, I shall give a short narrative, and that also in the way I have heard from him, of a horrid case of oppression on a poor widow that turned the tender boy of eight or nine into a firm, determined reformer.

When Mr. Banurji was a boy of eight or nine, a young widow belonging to the large joint-family of which he was then a member, went astray and was one night brought back by force by some of the fiery youngmen of the house. She was kept locked up in a room and most violently beaten at midnight. The horrid and brutal picture, he says, is still before his mind, and it makes him tremble whenever he thinks of it. The poor woman's face was tied with a piece of cloth and thus gagged that she could not cry out. The brutal treatment went on for two nights. The suppressed moanings of the unfortunate girl awoke all the inmates of the portion of the house in which young Banurji lived, and they stood trembling in the veranda. They would not long be allowed to remain there, but were ordered by the assaulting party to go into their respective apartments. On the third night, the horrid process of beating went on, and in the morning it was announced that the widow had committed suicide by hanging herself from the beams! Before the night was over the dead body was carried to the river-side and burned! This shocking incident put the little boy's impressible mind into a melancholy mood which he could not get over for a very long time. "Who knows" he thought, "how many unfortunate widows have suffered the same fate in Hindu homes"? This dreadful affair moved him afterwards to throw himself heart and soul into the cause of our widows.

I now proceed to tell the story of the rescue of Mr. Banurji's widowed niece from the hands of her orthodox relatives and her subsequent re-marriage. Mr. James Wilson, Editor, *Indian Daily News*, has written a short history of the female education work at Barahanagar, in which he has given a short narative of the difficulties which Mr. Banurji met with in carrying on the work. In page 13 of his pamphlet he writes: "When they (*i.e.*, Mr. and Mrs. Banurji) carried on the work of female education in the family house, there were, among others, their cousin-sister and her widow daughter in the Zenana class, receiving education near Mr. Banurji and his wife. Darkness and light cannot remain together in the same place and at the same time; with the advent of the one the other must recede, and such is also the case with education. If a really good education is given to the females, they cannot long remain in darkness and superstition. Receiving some education, his cousin naturally became anxious to better the condition of her widow daughter, and when Sisipada left his ancestral house with his wife (June, 1866), they expressed a desire to follow them. But having no house of their own, and their movements being then uncertain on account of the hot persecution which raged against them at the time, they could not give a favourable response to their wishes, but assured them that when they had their own house ready, they would be happy to give them shelter. In the year 1868, by which time they had their own dwelling-house built, they invited them. They came and lived with the Banurjis as members of the family." Mr. Wilson then goes on to say that the younger widow was afterwards remarried; but there is a long chapter between the two facts noticed by Mr. Wilson, namely Mr. Banurji's two relatives joining him and his niece being re-married, which latter event took place on the 28th November, 1868. The events omitted are, however, so interesting, and they present such a vivid picture of the present organization of our joint-family

system, and also show so clearly with how much horror our countrymen look upon reforms introduced even in directions wherein they are urgently needed, that I think it desirable to give a full account of them. When Mr. Banurji had a class of young ladies in his ancestral family house (the family consisted of a large number of inmates, seven generations both by the male and female lines living in the same house) his cousin and her widowed daughter received some education from him along with the other female members. Bidhumukhi, his cousin, was the widow of the late Parvaticharan Mukhurji of Nibodoi in the Twenty-four Parganas. In the year 1864, her brother having removed to Narail in the District of Jessore as Headmaster of the local High School, she and her daughter had also to go with him. Babu Yadavchandra Chakravarti, retired Chief Justice of the Kuchbehar State, was then the Minister of the local Brahma Samaj, and the whole family fell under his influence. In a short time the brother became an earnest Brahmo, identified himself with all the reform movements of the place, and helped his sister and her daughter to continue the education which they had first received from Mr. Banurji in the old family house. The elevating influence of the Brahma Samaj was clearly perceptible in the family. Brahmo books were in the hands of the ladies, and the young widow had not to go through fasting and other austerities enjoined in the Shastras for Brahmana widows. Things thus went on smoothly there, while at Barahanagar Mr. Banurji had to pass through bitter persecutions for severing his connection with the prevailing religious and social usages of the time and for publicly giving up caste and idolatry (23rd July, 1865). Though he had no one at Barahanagar in those days of severe trials from whom he could get even words of sympathy, he had encouraging letters from his cousin, Bidumukhi's brother, who fully approved of his actions. Things went on in this manner as long as he continued in that far-off town. But when the school closed for the Puja vacation, he came to Barahanagar with his family ; and such was the height of the persecution against Mr. Banurji at the time, that his cousin gave way to it, and felt obliged not only to cut off his own connection with his Brahmo cousin, but instructed his sister and niece not to see him and his wife, or even to talk with them. The noble aspirations and the reforming ardour which were uppermost in the mind of the new convert while he was away from home, now disappeared under the pressure of public opinion, orthodoxy and bigotry, and the consequence was that, in a short time, he became quite an altered man. Mr. Banurji was greatly mortified to see this change in his cousin, and still more was he grieved to see that the latter's sister and niece were forced to conform to the old, superstitious ways against their faith and against their wishes. The moral and religious education which was imparted to them had, however, taken some root in their hearts, and though they were forbidden to come and see Mr. Banurji and his wife in their part of the house, they could not feel comfortable without coming to them and representing their grievances to them and seeking their counsel. Hitherto the male members of the house had been foremost in putting their persecuting activities against the pair, but the females of the house had remained rather indifferent. All Barahanagar, however, was in arms against

them; meetings were held to take steps for putting the reforming couple into all sorts of troubles; the barber, for instance, was forbidden to shave Mr. Banurji, the washerman was threatened with punishment if he washed their clothes; drinking water from the river was not to be supplied to them, and even the *mehtar* was enjoined not to cleanse their privy. When Mr. Banurji had thrown away the Brahmanical thread, he had already been compelled to leave his former quarters and remove to a small portion of the old family house, a damp ground-floor room which had previously been the habitation of the family cow. There he had to live with his family, and there his second son, Satyaprakas, was born. When there was this commotion in the social atmosphere of Baranagar, the ladies of the house did not join in the outside uproar. But this redeeming feature in the history of the social persecution against the Banurjis did not last long. On the occasion of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the Brahma Samaj held at the Adi Samaj Prayer-Hall, on the 23rd January, 1866, Mr. Banurji was present with his wife. His brother Kedarnath also accompanied them. This was the first time that ladies had seats in the Brahma Samaj. Taking his wife and brother to the Samaj, however, was a new social offence which society could not tolerate. On their return from the anniversary, they met with renewed and vehement persecution, and this time ladies of the house, added their powerful influence and voice to it. It was resolved that the odious pair must leave the ancestral house. The other members of the family feared that if they remained in the house, they would gradually influence the whole family to take to their ways of thought and action, and that as this time Mr. Banurji had taken his wife and brother to the Samaj, he might afterwards take there some of the other members of the family. This apprehension brought all the orthodox energies together and it was resolved that the dreaded couple must at once be forced to leave the house. They could have taken a strong stand against this resolution of theirs, for, thank God, the law of the country was in their favour; but Mr. Banurji thought to himself that he and his wife would not be happy in that house with such a large group of people always staring at their faces and watching their movements with suspicious looks. They felt that they would have no peace there and that every attempt on their part for improvement would be thwarted. This consideration led them to yield to the wishes of the family. The house was something like a small village, and to live there with their heterodox ideas would not at all be desirable. When, however, Mr. Banurji was arranging with his relatives to quit the ancestral family house, his cousin and her widowed daughter felt themselves very miserable, for they knew that when the Brahmo pair should leave the house there would be no one there to show any consideration for their sufferings. They therefore very earnestly begged to be allowed to accompany them when they left the house. Mr. Banurji could not practically respond to their wishes though he deeply felt for them. He had no house of his own and his own movements were uncertain on account of the hot persecution that raged against him at the time. However, when he left his ancestral house (June, 1866) he gave his poor relatives to understand that when he should have a house of his own, he would be in a position to help them. People in this

country cannot bear the thought of being without a house of their own, and therefore in the morning of the very day that the Banurjis left the ancestral house, Mr. Banurji laid the string of measurement for commencing the building of his new house. This ceremony is the same as laying the foundation-stone of a building, with only this difference, that we, in this country, make our ceremony more religious than the other appears to be. The house was ready in the year 1868, and it was occupied for the first time on the 8th March of that year amidst much thanksgiving and rejoicing. And now Bidhumukhi and her widowed daughter began anxiously to hope for a change in their lot, for they felt very unhappy in the old house; not that the family was poor and could not maintain them, but because it was very hard for them to conform, against their faith and inclination, to the austerities imposed upon widows by orthodoxy. As Professor Max Muller justly wrote some years after: "The misery of a young widow in India must at the present time be fearful. They know better now and yet must submit to their fate." Such was in fact the condition of Mr. Banurji's two unfortunate relatives. They were forced to act up to the old superstitious usages for the sake of the family honour and also for the threatenings they had from the family. When the Banurjis came to their new house, Bidhumukhi and her daughter became anxious to come over to them, and though Mr. Banurji saw what a bold step that would be, and what fresh persecutions it would bring upon them, he could not refuse them help. Mrs. Banurji, far from opposing the idea of their coming, urged him to do all he could to help them out of their very painful situation. Miss Carpenter thus speaks of Mrs. Banurji's attitude in this matter in a letter to Mr. Banurji, dated the 24th July, 1868: "Though I wrote to you by the last post, yet I cannot let a single one pass without expressing to you my feelings of warm sympathy and admiration for the noble work you are *doing* for the women of India. While others *talk* you *act*! The first step taken of emancipating her whom you have taken to be your partner in life, and giving her the true position in your household, all others are comparatively easy. You have discovered what noble spirits exist in the weaker sex, which, in your country, is crushed and debarred from the exercise of the powers conferred by the Almighty Father, and you are reaping the true reward in the sympathy and help afforded to you by your dear wife. How my heart opens to her when you describe her as urging you to help your poor 'cousin-sister' and her widowed daughter!" Bidhumukhi and her daughter came to the new house on the early dawn of the 26th June, 1868, and there was great rejoicing in the family on their arrival. Bidhumukhi's brother was at that time Headmaster of the Janai Training School, in the district of Hugli. Immediately on the ladies' arrival at Mr. Banurji's house, he wrote to the brother, informing him of the affair and telling him that there remained two courses now open to him, first, not to take any notice of the matter whatever, but quietly to remain at Janai till the popular hue and cry had subsided, or, secondly, to come home at once and join the people in raising their voice against him and take the lead in an agitation against him. As has been already said, the whole day the ladies came passed happily in the family, though now and then some disturbance was caused by

the visits of some of the female members of the ancestral house, who came to persuade the mother and daughter to go back; but the latter remained firm in their determination to stay. Mr. Banurji's brother, Kedar, had first come in the morning to persuade them. On the other hand, there were thanksgivings and the singing of hymns in the family, and the Banurjis had the inward satisfaction of having done a duty to their poor relations. Thus things went on and none of their numerous relations took any more notice of the affair. In the morning of Sunday, the 29th June, Mr. Banurji mentioned the matter in his sermon from the pulpit of the local Brahma Samaj, of which he was the founder and minister. It was also announced that at 4.p.m. that day a special service would be held at his house to ask the blessing of God on the relatives who had so courageously come and joined them. On that day the Girl's School was kept open to enable Mr. Banurji to examine the girls as he could not see the school on week days, being employed as a clerk in the Bengal Accountant General's office in Calcutta. At 12 o'clock (noon) he went to the school, distinctly instructing the ladies of the house not to leave the doors open, lest some from the old house should come in. The way to the school lay by that house and his relatives saw him pass as he went to the school. Taking advantage of his absence, several male members of the family came by a footpath through the gardens in the direction of the house, and keeping themselves at a little distance, sent a boy to it with the pretext of asking the elder lady for a key which, as the boy was instructed to say, her brother wanted from her. The boy called from outside for the key and Bidhumukhi, in her usual simple way, opened the door to explain that the key was not with her. No sooner had the door been opened than the whole regiment entered the house and Bidhumukhi's brother who had come home from Janai on the previous night, fell at the feet of his sister and entreated her to go back to the house; but she would not. In the meantime some of the other relations who had invaded the house, took away the young widow by force! The men then pounced upon the mother, but she struggled and took a firm stand not to go back! The daughter could be taken away on the arms, but this could not be done with respect to the mother. They, however, used all their force, and literally dragged her out to the public road! She was resolute and would not move, and all this she did in expectation that her cousin should be back from the school to help her. But he was deeply engaged there, and no one of the neighbourhood gave him any information as to what was going on in his house! The lady was subjected to the most cruel treatment. She was dragged on and on! Her hair hung loose on her back and her clothes were torn! She lay on the public road and a crowd gathered round her to see the spectacle; but there was not a word of sympathy for her! On the contrary all told her to go back to the family house. What else could a weak woman do against such odds? Her strength failed her and she was at last obliged to yield! The mother and daughter were thus forcibly taken back to the ancestral house.

Mr. Banurji knew nothing of what was going in and out of his house. He had no servant (for none would take his

service) to run with the news to him at the school, and the feelings of the place were so bitter against him at the time, that none of the neighbours or bystanders would come to help him with the news. He was deeply engaged in examining the girls, suspecting nothing wrong in his house. At about 3 p.m. he left the school with a view to be at the house for arranging the prayer-meeting whichwas announced to be held at 4 o'clock. What was his dismay and sorrow to know what had happened in the house during his absence! And who knew, he thought, what fate awaited the unfortunate ladies in the family house where they had been taken away by force? They were kept in a room under lock and key, and treated as prisoners. He afterwards heard from his cousin that on the first day that theywere taken back to the house, they were served with *dhan* *i.e.* raw rice with husks on, as their food! Though the ancestral house was not very distant from Mr. Banurji's own dwelling-house, (being only five minutes' walk) he could get no information of what was going on there, all communications with the outside being entirely cut off. The family having great influence in the town, they could do anything they liked in the matter without any of the neighbours venturing to say or do anything against them. Moreover, the sympathy of the whole town was on their side. For days together, therefore, Mr. Banurji was entirely in the dark as to what was going on, and how the two ladies were being treated. After they had thus been taken away, his friends came to his house for the appointed prayer-meeting, and they advised him to bring a charge against his relatives for trespass and illegal confinement. But he could not persuade himself to take to that course. Prayer was his strength and refuge in all the troubles of his life, and in the present instance also he held fast to prayer. A spirit of retaliation could, therefore, never come in the line of his actions even at times of the worst persecution and inspite of all sorts of ill-treatment that he was subjected to for outraging popular feelings as regards religion and social laws. He could thus, by divine blessing, wait and suffer. If it was the will of God, he thought to himself, that his two relatives should come to him, they *would do so* notwithstanding all the opposition and hindrances of the family to thwart that end. He further considered that if he brought a charge against the family, as desired by his friends, it would be impossible for him to prove his case in court, for all the family influence would be brought on the mother and daughter to say that they had gone back of their own free choice, for otherwise it would go very seriously against the brother, who must be taken as the leader of the trespass. He would prostrate himself before his sister and beg to be saved from the heavy punishment which must be inflicted on him and on others of his party if she and her daughter deposed against them; and the sister, out of natural affection, and also by pressure, might say that she and her daughter had gone back to the house of their own free-will. Mr. Banurji would thus lose the case, and then they might bring a counter charge against him for having brought a false and malicious charge against the family. Considering all these points, and fully relying on God, he remained quiet as if nothing had happened.

However, Bidhumukhi and her widowed daughter could not long

be kept in the house as captives, and the question arose what was to be done to take them back as members of the family. The advise of competent Hindu authorities was obtained, who stated that *Chandrayana*, shaving of the head, and *prayaschitta* (atoning ceremony) would not be a sufficient penance for their offence of having lived for three nights in a Brahmo's house and taking their meals with him, but they should have *nirbashan*, *i.e.* they must be banished from the house and made to live for some years in holy places for the expiation of their sins. Things went on in this manner for some weeks when, taking advantage of the presence in the village of a *Panda*, a guide to holy places, the mother and daughter were sent away in his charge,—where, their Brahmo relative could not ascertain. Some said they were sent to Brindaban, some, to Benares, while others thought they had gone to the father of the young widow, the old Kulin Brahmana, who was then living. It was not without much trouble and loss of time that Mr. Banurji could at last ascertain that they had been sent to Babu Kalidas Maitra, an old retired gentleman of Barahanagar who had been living with his family at the holy city of Benares, "where" Mr. Banurji says in his notes "in the banishment, the immolation and even the moral degradation of many an unfortunate Hindu widow are imbedded the foul records of the family dishonour of not a few of the most respectable houses of Bengal."

Ever since the ladies had been taken away by force, Mr. Banurji had been praying and planning as to how they might be rescued. So, when the news of their removal to Benares reached him, he wrote to Dr. Loknath Maitra, a prominent member of the Bengali community of that city, who had sympathy with all reform movements, inquiring whether the two banished ladies were actually at Benares, and whether, if he went there, he could see them. His reply came in due time, giving Mr. Banurji the assurance that they were at Benares and that if he went there he could see them. For nearly two months of the receipt of this most welcome letter, he did not move in the matter, nor did he further write to Babu Loknath, lest, by any mischance, his plans for the rescue of the ladies should get out. He kept matters to himself and began privately to make his arrangements for a trip to Benares. He could not take leave from his office, for that would have stimulated inquiries and given rise to a suspicion that he was planning the rescue of his cousin and her daughter. He did not even carry his travelling things direct from Barahanagar, lest that should attract notice and frustrate his plans. But as the Durgapuja holidays drew near, he began to remove his clothes and things piece by piece, as it were, to a friend's house in Calcutta, to prevent the slightest suspicion being raised at Barahanagar about his plans and movements. By the time the offices were going to close for the long vacation, all his things had been removed to Calcutta, and on the last working day previous to the holidays, he left Barahanagar in the usual way of attending office, and directly from there took the night train for Benares (19th September, 1868). In those days the trains did not run as fast as they do now, and he reached the holy city at midday on the 21st September, breaking his journey for a day at Jamalpur. He was anxious about the success of his plans, and feared lest, through some mischance, anybody at Benares

should recognise him and communicate the news of his arrival there to his cousin's custodian, Babu Kalidas Maitra. So he drove in a closed carriage from the railway station to the house of Dr. Loknath Maitra. And strange to say, by a miraculous ordering of a benign Providence, his cousin and her daughter, having been anxious to get some news of him and his intentions, had, just a few minutes before, come on a visit to his friend when his closed carriage drove up to his house! God had thus made his path easy and straight for him. On arrival he sent a message to Babu Loknath, who was then speaking with the two ladies in a big room on the second floor. Babu Sasipada was immediately asked to go up, and what was his joy and astonishment to see his cousin and her daughter there, busy in writing a letter to him. Both parties were speechless, and tears rolled down from their eyes! At last Mr. Banurji asked them if they were willing to come with him, which they very gladly agreed to do. They then went back to the house of their guardian, Babu Kalidas Maitra, made their arrangements, and in half an hour's time came back without any one knowing where they were going. In sacred places like Benares, Hindu ladies move about far more freely than anywhere else, and so the movements of Mr. Banurji's relatives remained unnoticed at the time they escaped from their guardian's surveillance. Mr. Banurji left Benares with them, but instead of coming down,—as in the usual course he should have done—he took the up-train to Allahabad. The *Indian Messenger*, writing long after of the incident, says: "News of their escape travelled on the swift wings of the wire, and the Hindu relations were once more thrown into consternation. A man with a lawyer was immediately despatched from Barahanagar to capture them on the way," but Mr. Banurji frustrated all their schemes by taking the train in the opposite direction to Allahabad. At this place he left his relations in the house of Babu Gopalchandra Ghosh, an influential Brahmo of that station, and himself started for a short travel to enjoy the rest of his holidays. He visited Agra and then went up to Delhi. While in the capital of the great Moghul Emperors, Babu Kesavchandra Sen came down with his family from Simla, where he had been the guest of the Viceroy, Lord Lawrence. Mr. Banurji joined that party and went with them to Lucknow, but was obliged to leave them there as the holidays were about to come to an end. He then returned to Allahabad, took his two relations with him and came down to Monghyr, then a very important centre of Brahmo activities. A number of the most devoted and enthusiastic followers of Babu Kesavchandra Sen were at that time stationed at this beautiful old city, which, owing to this fact, has played an important part in the early history of the Brahma Samaj. Here Mr. Banurji left his relations in the family of Babu Prasannakumar Sen, who then held an important post in the railway office and was the head of the Brahmo settlement of that station. Leaving them there, Mr. Banurji came down to Calcutta, hired a house at Surtibagan, where he removed his family from Barahanagar. Then, availing himself of the opportunity afforded by the next holiday, he went up to Monghyr and brought his two banished relations to Calcutta on the 11th October, 1868. Thus they again lived together after passing

through many vicissitudes for a period of three months and ten days, during which time the two ladies had very hard times of it. A special thanksgiving service was held in the Calcutta house and great were the rejoicings over this happy re-union brought about by God's mercy. "Blind must he be," says Mr. Banurji in his notes, "who should fail to see the hand of God in this interesting episode and in this happy re-union."

From what we have said above as regards the position of the widow in Hindu society, it will be seen that Babu Sasipada now desired as speedy a settlement of his young niece, through marriage, as possible, and Providence, in whose hands he was, as Mr. Pratapchandra Mazumdar once wrote to him, "a special instrument," happily made such a settlement easier for him than it might otherwise have been. We have seen that, leaving his ancestral house, Babu Sasipada lived for some months in the house of a Brahmo friend, Babu Chandranath Chauduri, of his own village. Babu Chandranath, after joining the Brahma Samaj, found it exceedingly difficult to manage his young wife, who was instigated by his female relations to put him to trouble; and knowing the power for good Mr. and Mrs. Sasipada had been among the ignorant women of their own family, he asked them to go and live with him, to help him to gain over his wife to the cause of the new movement. That was the motive and those the circumstances that led Babu Sasipada to go and live with this new convert to his church and God so blessed his and his wife's work in his family that Babu Chandranath Chaudhuri's wife gradually came round to the opinions of her husband, and within a few days commenced to take part in the daily worship of that small Brahmo family; and by the time Babu Sasipada left her husband's roof, on the completion of his own house, all her opposition to his new ways of life and thought had ceased.

But it was not in the ordering of Providence that Babu Chandranath should enjoy the loving help and sympathy of his wife in his new life for any length of time, for within a few months of Babu Sasipada's removal from his house, the young lady departed this wfe. The position of a widower, though most painful and trying everylihere, was peculiarly so in the small community of the Brahmos of Bengal in those days. The peculiar circumstances of their case,—excommunicated as they were from the parent society, and separated by rigorous caste rules from friends and relatives,—made the position of a widower in the Brahma Samaj, in those days, not only painful to himself, but equally embarrassing to his friends in the new Church. Most of the members of the Brahma Samaj, in those days, were converts from the orthodox Hindu community; and the latitude granted in certain matters, by the Hindu scriptures and Hindu customs, to those who might temporarily fall off from their communal state, to go back to the old community after undergoing some expiatory penances, always kept an opening for the weaker members of the new fold (specially non Brahmanas) to fall back into the lap of the old supersitions. It was only by marrying in the Brahma Samaj, that a man might absolutely cut off all chances of ever going back to the parent community. Many a man, weak in faith, would, in those days, as even now, join the Brahma Samaj, and having zealously worked for the noble cause for

some years, as soon as it became necessary to get themselves or their daughters or sisters married, would go back to the old society, deserting the movement for religious and social reform for ever. Many others, having similarly once joined the Brahma Samaj with real earnestness and enthusiasm, braving all difficulties and suffering most cruel persecutions, would again, on the death of their wives, marry back in the old society, in the old way, thus severing for good their connection with the new Church. The position of a widower was therefore considered as peculiarly critical in the Brahma Samaj in those days; and on the death of a man's Hindu wife, his Brahmo friends would naturally try to secure for him a Brahmo lady, mostly some widow who may have come over to the Samaj, and arrange for their marriage. On the death of Babu Chandranath Chaudhuri's wife, his friends in the Brahma Samaj, the most intimate among whom was Babu Sasipada Banurji, began anxiously to look about for a suitable bride for him. On the return of Sasipada Babu's cousin and her widowed daughter to Calcutta in October, 1868, the idea of arranging the latter's marriage with Babu Chandranath Chaudhuri, may naturally have suggested itself to her uncle. Kusum Kumari was then fifteen years of age. Her first marriage took place when she was only five years old, and she became a widow a year after! Babu Chandranath was a young men of 26. He was a friend of the family, and had consequently no difficulty in being introduced to the young lady. "The two saw each other for a few days," as Babu Sasipada wrote about the time in a letter to Miss Carpenter, "in my Soorti-bagan house, (in Calcutta) and they liked each other" and in consequence Babu Sasipada arranged for their marriage with the consent of his cousin, the young widow's mother. And it may well be said that of all the very bold acts that this intrepid Brahmana reformer has done in his life, this was perhaps the boldest. Though a new thing to the people, the education of women, was at most, even in their estimation, a useless innovation, while the marriage of young widows appealed secretly to the humanitarian instincts of even the most rigid conservative. But no foreigner can even so much as faintly realise, by the utmost stretch of his imagination, the sense of outrage and humiliation which a misalliance among the caste-ridden Hindus produces. The Hindus can tolerate even a moral falling-off on the part of their women, but not an open connection with a man belonging to a low and inferior caste. A woman who goes away may be lopped off and gradually forgotten as the dead or withering branch of a tree that is cut down and thrown into the fire, and lost sight of for ever, but a woman who marries a low-caste man, owing to the very fact that she does not thereby fall-off from virtue, remains as a standing disgrace and a crying scandal of her family. Indeed, the feeling against inter-marriage was, at the time that we are here writing about, pretty strong even among the members of the Brahma Samaj, and it is known that the great Brahmo leader, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur, though he never publicly opposed it, would not conceal his disapproval of it in private conversation. And the marriage arranged by Babu Sasipada between his niece and Babu Chandranath was among the most violently radical that have as yet

been performed even among the most radical followers of Babu Kesavchandra Sen.

It would be well to remember, when judging of the present day reforms on this subject, that the ancient Hindu authorities did sanction a kind of intermarriage between one class and another. The form of marriage called *anulom*, that is an intermarriage in which the husband came of a superior and the wife of an inferior caste, was sanctioned in ancient Hindu society. A Brahmana, under those laws, in those days, could, without loss of caste, marry a Kshatriya, Vaisya, or even a Sudra woman; a Kshatriya, a Vaisya and a Sudra woman, and a Vaisya a Sudra woman. These were all *anulom* marriages, but for a Kshatriya, Vaisya or Sudra to marry a Brahmana woman or for a Vaisya or a Sudra a Kshatriya woman or for a Sudra a Vaisya woman—these that were called *pratilom* marriages, were not favoured except in the case of such highly privileged persons as king Yayati. In the case of *svayamvara* however,—when the bride was allowed to choose her own husband,—all caste distinctions were systematically disregarded. With the decay of ancient civilisation, and the change wrought in the constitution of Hindu society by time and the political vicissitudes of the people, with the absolute abolition of inter-marriages, however, the old distinction between the *anulom* and the *pratilom* system has gone out of people's thoughts altogether; but the old feelings seem to linger still, and the marriage of a male of a higher caste with a female belonging to a lower is looked upon generally with less repugnance than that of a female belonging to a higher with a male of a lower caste. Considering all these circumstances, the marriage arranged by Babu Sasipada between his niece, Kusumkumari, and his friend, Babu Chandranath, which was the first widow intermarriage of the *pratilom* class, was decidedly one indicating the strength of character and liberality of sentiments of this high-caste Brahmana reformer. He was, indeed, doing nothing that either the Shastras or ancient custom did not sanction. Kusumkumari's choosing a man,—an influential man, as we shall see,—of a lower caste than her own, was as much legal and proper as Devayani's choice of Yayati, and if the freedom and naturalness of those days had continued to the present time, neither she nor her uncle would have been more unpopular than Devayani and her father, Sukracharya. But in these degenerate days, Mr. Banurji was considered as introducing or sanctioning one of the boldest and most objectionable innovations. Babu Chandranath was, by caste, a Sadgop, whose position in the Hindu social economy is lower than—immediately below—the first three castes, the Brahmana, the Vadya and the Kayastha, who top the Bengali Hindu community. His caste, in fact, corresponds to the ancient Vaisya caste, and well-informed men belonging to it do claim to be nothing more or less than Vaisyas. But though of an inferior caste, Babu Chandranath's social position was not very insignificant in the small manufacturing town of Barahanagar. What the Chaudhuris lacked in the matter of caste-respectability, was more than made up by their wealth, enterprise charities and education. The largest and the most famous of the castor-oil manufactories of the village was the one owned by the late Babu

Gopalchandra Chaudhuri, Babu Chandranath's father, who with the late Babu Rajkumar Banurji, Babu Sasipada's father, had also been the founder of the earliest English school at Barahanagar. Like many members of the trading classes in and near Calcutta, in the early days of English education in Bengal, the Chaudhuris of Barahanagar also took to it early and have supplied even a few members to the higher services of the Government, one of them having risen to the honoured rank of a Subordinate Judge in Bengal. So, though Babu Sasipada did not allow his caste-conceit to have the least influence upon him in the selection of a husband for his niece, he never altogether overlooked the great truth that the moral disabilities that social subjection caused by the caste-system, bring on the members of the lower castes, can only be removed and remedied by the higher influences of culture, education, and the society of the higher castes, opportunities for which are oftentimes afforded by wealth and civil distinctions.

As soon as the young lady gave her consent to Babu Chandranath's proposal, Babu Sasipada began to make due preparations for the celebration of the marriage. It was fixed for the 21st of November, 1868, and as Babu Sasipada's house in Calcutta was much too small to accommodate the large number of guests that were expected to be present at the ceremony, a "Calcutta millionare" very kindly placed his spacious garden house in Maniktala in the eastern suburbs of Calcutta, at the disposal of Babu Sasipada, for the celebration; and all arrangements were accordingly made, and a large number of invitations to the wedding sent out to his numerous friends both among the native and the European members of the community. But on the 20th, the day previous to that fixed for the marriage, the owner of the garden-house sent word informing him of his inability to lend his house on the ground that his caste-people objected to it. The worry and vexation and the trouble that this sudden backsliding caused to the young reformer, can be better imagined than described. But the wonderful energies of Babu Sasipada have always risen equal to the greatest emergencies, and he at once sent out fresh cards cancelling the the previous invitation, and explaining briefly the cause of the unfortunate contingency. But difficulties and trials that upset ordinary men, serve more than anything else to bring out the mettle of the brave and the intrepid. In this case, this unexpected difficulty only helped to impress upon his European friends the immense difficulties that the young reformer had to fight against at every step of his work. Dr. Waldie, who had always watched his movements with interest and friendly concern, wrote to him in reply to his note cancelling the engagement,—"Yours of today received. I am very sorry for the pastponement on your account and that of your friends. It is very provoking indeed and very stupid that people should draw back in that way, and very unfair besides; better refuse at first. I shall be glad to hear when you make some better arrangement." Babu Sasipada had, as he wrote to Miss Carpenter, "great difficulty to find a house to celebrate the marriage; no one would give one even for hire At last I got a house belonging to the Seals, 66, College Street, for one month's hire. Rs. 60" (though occupying it only for three days). The marriage was

celebrated the following Saturday, just a week after the first date, in this house.

The large number of people, both Europeans and Indians, who came to witness the ceremony, bore unerring testimony both to the growing interest of the public in the widow marriage movement and of their sympathy with and admiration for their host, Babu Sasipada. The divine service, conducted by the great Brahmo leader, Kesavchandra Sen, was most solemn and impressive, and among the assembled guests were judges of the High Court and other high officers of Government, as well as many non-officials of rank and position, of both the native and the European communities, while there was also a fair number of English and Bengali ladies. But if the number of guests inside the house was large, the concourse of people who assembled on the courtyard and gathered in the street, was simply immense. Brahmo marriages, by the novel ritual attending them, even now draw large crowds of sight-seers everywhere. In those days, when the thing was absolutely new, it sometimes would be found impossible, simply on account of the rushing crowds, to hold the celebrations in a peaceful order. On the present occasion, the usual disturbance inevitable in every large gathering, was considerably increased by the active hostility of a portion of the crowd formed of the people of Barahanagar, that gathered near the house. As an Indian journal said,—"The house in which the marriage was going to be celebrated, became a point of attack, and a shower of stones from outside often disturbed the proceedings." But for the assistance of the Police, that had been secured betimes, the celebration might have been attended with more serious results, such was the menacing attitude of the rowdy multitude collected in and about the premises.

But if the sensation caused by the remarriage of the young lady was great in Calcutta, at Barahanagar it was simply indescribable. Friends and enemies, relations and even utter strangers, all vied with one another in persecuting and insulting the man who had, by this celebration, grossly scandalised the whole native community of that little town. He was abused by the men, cursed by the women, ridiculed by the frivolous, reviled by the violent, and hated by all. Some, finding that all these abuses and threats did not reach Sasipada, who was still living in Calcutta, employed their ingenuity in reaching him by the easy means of the Post office, and almost every day anonymous letters containing the foulest abuse and the most outragious libels against himself, and even the ladies of his family, used to be received by him in Calcutta. Such letters were also sent to some of Mr. Banurji's English friends, evidently with the mischievous intention of lowering him in their estimation. These letters were sent by his friends to Mr. Banurji. Sasipada had long before been put out of caste by his people. They had deprived him of the right of eating with them. They ceased to smoke their *hukas* on the same seat with him and it was done by the advice of an 'educated' and 'enlightened' man who had the slightest possible regard for the superstitions of his people. They had sent him away from his paternal roof; and had refused to extend to him or his the commonest amenities of neighbourly life. Nothing

was now left for them to deprive him of. But there still remained his public life, his place and work in the girls' school, the Social Improvement Society, and the Municipal Board. And their efforts were now directed to depriving him of all these and thus cutting off, as it were, all the sources of his public life, and his influence and popularity with the European section of the community. Writing a few months after the marriage, to Miss Carpenter, Babu Sasipada says:—"The inhabitants of Barahanagar wanted to remove me from the membership of the Social Improvement Society, but they failed, as, by the existing rules, they could not do so. They then wanted to have a rule passed to the effect that whoever would wound the feelings of the Hindu community, should forfeit the rights of membership." When all this storm was raging most violently at Barahanagar, Babu Sasipada came back with his family to his own house. The furious agitation against him, he found on his return, had not wholly confined itself to the use of the verbal weapons of abuse and insult, but had actually wreaked its vengeance upon his poor little house. The windows were broken, the doors were removed and the whole house presented the woeful appearance of the scene of some violently riotous proceedings. These were no surprises to the persecuted reformer; for although he had not been living at Barahanagar for a few months, his work brought him every Saturday to that town. The school, the temperance movement, the working men's club, the Improvement Society, and the Brahmo Samaj, all needed great care and even in those his most trying times, he never neglected his duties to these useful institutions. From his visits to the town, as also from communications frequently received both from friends and foes, he was well aware of the violent agitation raging against him in his own locality. Indeed, only a few days previous to his return to Barahanagar, his persecutors had, at a Committee meeting of the Social Improvement Society, made powerfully organised attempts to expel him from its membership. The question before the Commitee was a request that had been made by one Babu Taraknath Mukurji, for convening "a special general meeting of the society for the purpose of judging whether Babu Sasipada Banurji is fit to remain a member of the society and whether it would conduce to its prospects if he should continue to be so." The European gentlemen of the Committee were naturally on the side of the much abused reformer, while, among the native members, the late Dr. Shambhuchandra Mukurji, editor of *Reis and Rayet*, and two or three personal friends of Mr Banurji were also against his expulsion. But his enemies were very strong, and when it was pointed out that under the existing rules of the society Babu Sasipada could not be removed from its membership for having helped the marriage of his widowed niece, they became so exasperated, that even his character for honesty and purity was not free from their attacks. The leader of the party went so far as to make most libellous charges against Babu Sasipada and also against the married pair. But all these had not the slightest bearing on the question before the Committee, and therefore, finally, to connect his "misdeeds" with his work as member of the society, the leader asserted that Babu Sasipada had, while removing his cousin and her daughter, gone to their

guardian's house under cover of doing some work on behalf of the society. But he had a strong and sensible set of men to deal with, and as Babu Sasipada says, "it was gratifying how the Committee received all these statements. One member said it was all the out pourings of malice; another observed that he could never believe it, and so on."

Thus foiled in their attempt to expel him from the membership of an association that he had himself established and nourished, as it were, with his life-blood, the next move of these persecutors of the honest reformer, was to petition the Magistrate and Collector of the Twenty-four Parganas, praying for his removal from the Municipal Board of the town, of which he was then the Honorary Secretary. Writing to Miss Carpenter about the middle of 1869, Babu Sasipada said:—"The villagers, headed by a medical practitioner and my own relatives and kinsfolk, sent up an application to the Magistrate of the Twenty-four Parganas, praying for my removal from the Municipal Board, of which I was then Honorary Secretary, on the ground of my heterodoxy, and because I had brought on many changes which were revolting to the ideas and notions of the orthodox community." It is needless to say what the result of this application was. The Magistrate knew Babu Sasipada Banurji much too well and appreciated the improvements that he had affected in the Municipality much too sincerely to listen to such foolish requests, and despite the opposition of his townspeople, Babu Sasipada continued to act as Secretary to the local Municipality until his departure for England.

But though they could not, as we have seen, deprive Babu Sasipada of his right of membership of the Social improvement Society, they could do one thing,—refuse to re elect him as Secretary to that body, in 1869, and they did so in the annual meeting of that year. The schools suffered another shock by the remarriage of his niece, but by careful working they were able to get over it within a year. The Social Improvement Society also suffered materially from the want of the care and attention which as Secretary only he could bestow upon it; and in the language of one of the most prominent and active members of the Association, the late Dr. Waldie, it passed through "its death struggles." In fact such was the loss to all public movements in Barahanagar, during the year following the marriage of Babu Sasipada's niece, when an intolerent and insensate opposition against him had largely ruled the counsels of the little town, that even his enemies at the close of the year, saw their own mistake, and in the interests of the local institutions, that,—thanks to the perseverance, the tact, and the energy of the young reformer—had already become an organic part, as it were, of the social life of Barahanagar,—once more, at the commencement of the next following session, put him on his old place in their management. A hopeful change at once came over them all. His connection with the moribund institutions acted like that of the breath of spring upon dying and dried up trees. Dr. Waldie, the President of the Improvement Society, in reviewing the state of affairs in his speech at the seventh half-yearly meeting of the society (16th July, 1870), made prominent mention of the results achieved by Babu Sasipada's return to the secretaryship. "He congratulated the society, in reviewing its half

year's work of the present year, on its recovery—of which the present well-attended meeting was one of the signs—from its unfortunate condition, its death-struggles, as it were, of the last year, and paid a high compliment to the Secretary, Babu Sasipada Banurji, on whose return to his proper post, from which he had been kept out by religious and social bigotry, in the shape of rampant Hindu orthodoxy, he felicited the society. That the Secretary of every such society is its life, was well exemplified in the history of the Barahanagar society for the last year. In consequence of the outcry and combination alluded to, Babu Sasipada was not re-elected Secretary for 1869, and for the whole year the proceedings of the society were almost a blank, diversified by the attempts of certain parties who had gained the support of nearly the majority of the members, to expel Babu Sasipada from the post of Secretary,—from the society itself. There were few lectures on the literary side of the society and none of them good. There were more withdrawals than new members, the attendance at both the monthly general and the Committee meetings was miserable; and there was none of the practical 'improvement' work which was such a feature of the society. Since the re-election of Babu Sasipada, at the beginning of this year, there has, in the last six months, been a marked change."

But in the midst of all this cruel treatment that he received from his own people, Babu Sasipada enjoyed the supreme satisfaction that the honest performance of one's sacred duties to one's friends and neighbours affords, and had uniform sympathy and kindly encouragement from his European friends both in Calcutta and elsewhere. Sir John Budd Phear wrote to him a few days after the marriage of his niece:—"The treatment which you receive from your relations and neighbours affords an illustration of the deplorable amount of prejudice and bigotry which prevails even among the respectable classes of people in this country. Time and the spread of information can alone furnish the remedy." Miss Carpenter, on receipt of the account of the marriage, wrote to him thus:—"Your account of the wedding is most interesting. You have taken a grand step and assisted a noble and true principle. God bless you and yours!" Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, who could not attend the marriage party on the evening of the 28th November, 1868 "for some pressing matters," thus expressed himself:—"I fully sympathise with you on this grand movement. I cannot call it anything but grand, and though not present in body, I shall be with you in spirit. May all your enlightened efforts be crowned with all the success they deserve!"

It was only natural that when the men rebuked and the women reviled Babu Sasipada for helping the marriage of his widowed niece, the incident should have impressed some at least of the little sufferers in the small town quite differently. As the remission of the sentence of a single prisoner out of many imprisoned for a similar offence, and having equal recommendations, inspires many another unfortunate captive with some fair hopes of release, so did the marriage of Kusumkumari cause quite a flutter in the hearts of many a young widow of the little town of Barahanagar. One of these lived close to Babu Sasipada's place, with her husband's relations, just opposite to his house, on the other side of the road. She, like

many other young women of the place, used to come frequently to Babu Sasipad's house, to read with his wife, and drawn by the prospects of marriage that she would likely have on joining the Brahma Samaj, she, one day, like Kusum and her mother, finally removed to Babu Sasipada's house (1870). Though poor, the young reformer was ever ready to put his purse and his all in the service of the great cause of reform that he had so bravely espoused; and consequently received her most kindly. She too was very respectably connected, and although after the experience that he had gained in the case of his own cousin and her daughter, Babu Sasipada made it impossible for her friends to take her back by force from his house, the persecution that he had to suffer for giving her protection, was not less cruel than before. Indeed, apprehending bodily injury and riotous trespass into his house, Babu Sasipada had to engage the services of some guards for the protection of his family. In fact, in a sense, the persecution that he was subjected to on this occasion, was, if possible, even greater than what he had to suffer after his niece's remarriage. On that occasion, when the whole village was ranged against him, a small party was on his side, as we have already seen, from the extracts made above from the proceedings of the Social Improvement Society. But by the present case, he lost the sympathy of even this small body. After Kusamkumari's marriage, her uncle, Bidhumukhi's brother, did not come for sometime to Barahanagar from his place of business to avoid the humiliation which the affair brought, as he thought, on the family, and could not therefore join the persecution that raged against Mr. Banurji at the time. But after this marriage, when the party referred to raised a storm and formed a strong combination against Mr. Banurji, he used to come to Barahagar every week and joined the above combination. The combination thus formed lasted to the end of the chapter and pursued Mr. Bauurji with its poisoned shafts in all the reform work that he undertook from that time. The bitterness of the persecution directed by this worthy body towards its victim was deepened by the constant and merciless exposure in the journal then conducted by Mr. Banurji, of the irregular and hypocritical life led by many people in the town who would not so much as raise their little fingers in reforming themselves, but would yet pose as patriots and 'improvers' of society. One instance of the length that these people went was the part which they took in sending Mr. Banurji to jail for allowing a man of their stamp to be 'defamed' in his journal. The defamation was proved and the Editor and Mr. Banurji as Proprietor were sent to jail in hot haste, at the unusual hour of 2 p.m. on the day the judgment was passed, so that—as it seemed—Mr. Banurji's friends might not find time to arrange for his bail. His persecutors—the combination referred to—were jubilant and went that very afternoon to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to their goddess at Kalighat. Their clamorous rejoicings on their return from the temple sounded through the little town. But immediately after, their victim returned, having obtained bail through the intervention of his staunch and influential friends at the bar, such as Mr. Durgamohan Das and the brothers Manmohan and Lalmohan Ghosh, who left no stone unturned to get

him released as soon as they could and have his sentence quashed or reduced. The sentence, which was imprisonment for three months and a fine of Rs. 500, was reduced to a fine of Rs. 150 only, the imprisonment portion being wholly set aside. Sir John Phear greatly befriended Mr. Banurji in this difficulty, though he had nothing to do with the case in his capacity as judge. The following letter will show his feelings and attitude in the matter :—

"My dear Babu Sasipada,

"I was much grieved and distressed to learn, as I did within an hour of the event, the result of your case at Alipur. Mr. Davis's proceedings and the sentence passed by him show how little of true judicial discretion is possessed by some of our most experienced moffussil magistrates. The measure of punishment meted out is most extravagant! You may rely upon it, I think, that the imprisonment portion will be entirely set aside by the appeal court; and very probably the fine will be reduced to an almost nominal sum. Of course there was the defamation, and a conviction was inevitable; and it follows that some punishment must be awarded, and I do not think that you could reasonably expect this should be absolutely nominal. But regard being had to your frank avowal of the fault and to your published apology, it ought to have been as nearly so as possible: and I shall be greatly surprised if the judge does not take this view. Whatever the fine may be, I will gladly enable you to meet it without embarassment to yourself, because I think you have behaved honourably and with very proper principle in this unfortunate affair."

Sir John, I need hardly add, was true to the promise made in this letter. He paid the whole amount of the fine imposed upon Mr. Banurji!

But it was not only the widows of the neighbourhood who were influenced, more or less, by a secret ray of hope for the amelioration of their miserable condition by the widow-marriages that Babu Sasipada was instrumental in bringing about; the young men of the village also gradually became fired with a noble enthusiasm for the cause of reform. A band of earnest youngmen gradually gathered themselves around this Brahmana reformer, and in some cases, as young disciples everywhere do, they even outdid their leader in their wild enthusiasm for adventurous reforms. Indeed, in their zeal for widow-marriage they overlooked all other considerations, whether, of prudence or of the higher ideals of marriage, and on one occasion they actually managed to get out a young widow from one of the most respectable Brahmana families of the place, and arranged, without consulting their leader, for her marriage with a poor Brahmana, then keeping a nursery in the neighbourhood, who was suffering from very serious physical disabilities. The first time that Babu Sasipada came to know of it was when they brought a notice of the marriage to him as Registrar of Civil and Brahmo marriages under Act III. of 1872. Babu Sasipada did not at all approve of the union, but when the parties were so anxious to be united, he had no choice in the matter, and was bound to accept the notice of their marriage. On the day of the marriage, however, the courage of the youngmen who had arranged the union, failed them, and not a soul was present there

except the bride and the bridegroom, and a few relations of the bride, who had come to punish the youngmen who had worked this mischief Babu Sasipada's influence and his prestige in the little town, which had grown with the growth of friendly relations between him and the officials, some of them occupying the highest positions in Calcutta, deterred them, however, from creating any disturbance, although they did not hesitate to take him to task for helping not only the remarriage of their widowed relation, which in itself was inflicting a serious indignity upon the family, but for sanctioning, as they thought he did, her union with a cripple, who could not move about except on crutches, and that even on all fours. Two other widows of the place were married under Babu Sasipada's auspices and one of these marriages was among the working people. Besides helping these local widows to remarry, Babu Sasipada gave shelter and arranged the remarriage of not fewer than 35 other widows, most of them belonging to very respectable families. As has been mentioned in another paper, Babu Sasipada himself purposely married a widow when he married for the second time. In fact, ever since the remarriage of his niece, his home became a refuge for many a helpless and destitute Hindu widow. In the early days of the movement in Bengal, in the seventies more specially, the reform activities of Brahmo youngmen often found expression in the zeal with which they helped young widows among their relations and neighbours to come out of their homes and join the Brahmo Samaj, for purposes of remarriage; and, in the absence of any public institution where these widows might find shelter and education, they had, generally, to be put in Brahmo families, whence, as opportunities arose, they were married out. The work of rescuing young widows was always undertaken from the purest and most unselfish motives, and in no case was marriage permitted between the young widow and her rescuer: the inevitable result of which was that these widows had to live in some Brahmo family for years before they could be remarried. Of all Brahmo families, those of the late Babu Durgamohan Das, so long as his first wife was living, and of Babu Sasipada Banurji, gave shelter perhaps to the largest number of widows. They gave them some education and many of them have been remarried and are managing happy families, while several are engaged in the noble work of teaching girls. It will thus be seen that Babu Sasipada's own home had been practically, on a small scale, a widow's home long before he made any organised efforts for establishing such a home.

Besides helping particular widows, Babu Sasipada kept up, for many years, an agitation in the country in favour of the cause of widow-marriage through the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets and writing articles in the periodicals. He even wrote to friends in England and tried to interest them in the cause of the widows. One of the results of these exertions was a remarkable letter of Professor Max Muller that appeared in the *Times* and attracted public notice both in England and in this country. The Professor depicted the miserable lot of the Hindu widow in true colours and feelingly appealed to philanthropists to save them from the tyranny of blind and superstitious customs. The letter formed the text for comments, both favourable and unfavourable, in the papers throughout the country. The social reaction

called the Revival of Hinduism was then already in its full swing and the reception given to the Professor's letter by the so-called orthodox journals may therefore be easily imagined. The fact is, that with the solitary exception of the Hindu Widow's Home established and maintained for a number of years by Babu Sasipada Banurji—a Home that indirectly helped the marriage of widows,—no organised efforts have lately been made, since the days of Pandit Vidyasagar, to promote the re-marriage of widows in Bengal, and the cause has suffered a total collapse in the province. The principal cause of this seems to be the "revival" movement already referred to, which, by appealing to a false patriotism, has helped, to a frightful extent, in the perpetuation of wrong ideals of life and superstitious customs based on social inequity and injustice, but honoured by age. Another cause lies, no doubt, in the diminished zeal, ardour and activity of the reformers. If they were sufficiently active, all the forces of reaction would not have done half the injury they have done, and now that the "revival" movement seems to be dying a natural death, the responsibility for social stagnation and the non-advancement of the widow-remarriage and other progressive movements must rest wholly upon those who are blessed with reformed and liberal ideas, and to whom the ideal of a reconstituted native society, based on just, righteous and enlightened principles, has been revealed. Let all the forces of reform throughout the country be united and an organised attempt made to push on the good work. Already there are indications of a revived activity in the reformers of the Southern Presidency, and while in Bengal the last embers of the movement seem to be extinguished, several widow-remarriages have taken place in Madras and Bombay during the last few years through the noble efforts of some energetic workers. Let Bengal follow the lead of a province which she has so long called 'benighted,' and rousing herself with one supreme effort, recover her lost honour of being the pioneer of the widow-marriage and other reforms. Let the Vidyasagar anniversaries, which are now becoming common throughout the province, be made the occasion for reviving a movement which, more than any other thing done by the reformer, made him take the place he occupies in the estimation of his countrymen—a movement for which he may truly be said to have lived and died; for, it is by doing what Vidyasagar did and wished us to do, and not by merely praising him by word of mouth, that we can truly honour him.

